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SUGAR AND SPICE:
WEALTH ACCUMULATION AND
THE LABOUR OF INDIAN WOMEN IN FIJI, 1879-1930.

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'Why, what could she have done,
being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her
to burn?'

W.B. Yeats (No Second Troy)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the connection between the fact of 'femininity' of Indian women workers and the accumulation of wealth in Fiji over a period of fifty-one years, 1879-1930. This was the period during which sugar became the country's number one revenue earner. It is argued that Indian women's centrality to the (re)production of capital and labour stemmed from the exploitation of their labour on plantations and farms. As coloured indentured workers Indian women produced surplus for white industrial planters, and as unpaid domestic workers, they produced goods and services for Indian men. In turn, the surplus that women produced for free in the domestic arena enabled the white planter and miller to depress the wages paid to Indian men in the sugar sector and to create stability for male workers. Thus Indian women's labour in both public and private spheres created wealth which accumulated in the hands of both a class of non-producers and men.

Using an array of theoretical debates derived from Marxist Thought, Feminist Theories and Race/Third World Analyses, and fieldwork examples I argue that between 1879 and 1930 the awareness that Indian women possessed certain physiological and social attributes encouraged both white and Indian men in Fiji to exploit these women in such a way that money was made out of exchanging the products of their labour as well as their bodies as merchandise. These exploitative practices were submerged under a multitude of oppressive ideological messages, much of which had originated in other social and spatial contexts. The recipients absorbed messages of dependency that extolled the virtues of heterosexual coupling within which male dominance was seen to be in the interests of women. The private/public split, which relegated men and women to different areas of work, was maintained on the basis of power, violence and control over paid work by men. Despite these obstacles however, Indian women in Fiji continually resisted all attempts to control their bodies and wrest the products of their labour from them. The struggle between men in the Colony and Indian women for the possession of Indian women and the products of their labour forms the substance of this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1. The Fijian Context

This thesis describes and explains the ways in which the fact of 'femininity' of indentured and 'free' Indian women led to the accumulation of wealth in the Colony of Fiji between 1879 and 1930. I argue that the perception of women as possessors of certain feminine attributes was indispensable for wealth extraction and appropriation from all workers at the advent of capitalist and colonial penetration in Fiji. The appropriation of material wealth was accompanied by significant ideological and philosophical notions which defined and prescribed particular stereotypes for women. This combination of material disadvantage and stereotypical notions ultimately served to eliminate Indian women altogether from paid work, education and public politics.

When I first began this investigation some years ago, my conceptual problem was to discover why women of Indian origin in Fiji faced what appeared to be insurmountable difficulties in both public and private life. Defined as 'Indian' women even within the specific Fijian context, they appeared to attract particular forms of prejudices that seemed to have no obvious material origin. As 'Indians' they shared with Indian men second class citizenship which defined for them both economic and political boundaries within which they could exercise autonomy. Ever since they had first arrived as indentured labourers in 1879, Indians' political and economic aspirations had been hampered by the labelling of them as a labouring class of people. As part of this general class women faced particular deprivations and limitations in all aspects of social life, including political representation, economic independence and education. Furthermore, as Indians, women had to deal with particular forms of State violence and State regulations which served to quell their aspirations as workers. In terms of economic and political autonomy it was a long time before others in the Colony saw them as anything other than cane workers, forever relegated to the status of 'coolie'.

But Indian women were limited by more than their positioning as a particular migrant national group locked into a specific class

location. In terms of political and economic life, Indian men fared rather better than Indian women. Political representation was granted to Indian men more than thirty years before women got the vote, and economically, Indian women were prohibited by both written and unwritten policy from seeing themselves as producers of wealth. Under such circumstances it was inevitable that women would be relegated to areas of political and economic activity unclaimed by men, and that they would also be expected to conform to popular images or stereotypes of 'femininity' which further served to make their work invisible.

There is certainly no evidence to suggest that Indian men lobbied for women to be enfranchised, or to be seen as economically 'productive'. As far as they were concerned, Indian women were ably represented by Indian men. In education, although it was obvious that women did not suffer from a lack of intelligence, men received first chance. Apparently therefore, an array of constraints limiting women's behaviour, activities and aspirations were operating against Indian women which took into account their situation as a labouring and gendered class of people of colour.

It would appear from the literature on Indians in Fiji that women were the particular victims of colonisation and capitalist penetration of Fiji. Historical and contemporary accounts have defined women as victims of plantation agriculture and plantation violence. It is recognised that indenture as a method of labour exploitation was a 'new system of slavery' (Tinker 1974), and that women faced unique problems as part of the labour force. As 'coolies', they were forced to work for long hours for extremely low wages and as women, 'family' life and responsibility for children was denied them. Thus, it has been said, women were victims because they had to work as labourers and could not take care of the family, the 'natural' vocation of all women. In order for women's condition to undergo changes, their plight had to be brought to the attention of others outside of the immediate plantation environment who would help to rescue women from the ravages of plantation waged work.

In my view it would be a mistake to see women only as victims. Indian women have always been far too articulate, intelligent and hardworking to be relegated to the category of passive and docile victims. Yet, in many senses they were victims. When they walked off the coolie ships at the beginning of their three or five year period of contractual servitude, they immediately became victims of plantation social relations. They were exploited and abused as workers and raped and murdered as women. Furthermore they were treated as culturally and racially inferior by the dominant white minority which ran the affairs of the Colony. Against this extremely exploitative and oppressive social context they also appeared to be unable to exercise any form of protest. In terms of the literature at least, Indian women appeared to accept their condition of servitude with little resistance or overt reaction, thus reinforcing the notion that their exploitation as workers was less severe than the exploitation of men.

While the written literature portrayed Indian women as victims, this was not supported by the oral evidence. Some of the oral accounts surviving from the earliest days of indenture spoke of a different calibre of Indian womanhood. As a child I had been led to believe that some Indian women had been 'independent' and 'disobedient'. In Hindustani the term 'independent' is not a concept with positive implications. It implies negation of the collective, thus negation of survival itself because a person is not meant to stand alone outside of 'society'. Even though the indenture experience taught individualism in Fiji this was only admired in terms of business and public life. Outside of public enterprise, the collective, even for men, was still significant.

The notion of 'collective' was defined differently according to historical, economic and political circumstances. Under indenture for example, the collective was defined in terms of the indenture experience. There was a distinction made, among Indians themselves, between those who were 'girmitiyas' (indentured) and those who were not. Those who were unindentured were always the Other- the outsiders. After 1920 the collective assumed political and economic boundaries which again fostered certain ideas about common identity and the 'other'. One of the most significant collectivities that emerged after

indenture was that defined by religion and political affiliation. Needless to say, the boundaries of these collectives and the rules for acceptance or rejection were defined by men, usually men of prestige and/or wealth. Thus the notion of the 'independent' woman, or one who was 'disobedient' was defined in terms of the male oriented 'collective' and quite frequently, although not as rigorously, kept in place by women themselves.

As a child growing up in the liberal sixties I defined the notion of 'independence' somewhat differently from those of my parents' generation. Furthermore I had had an important personal experience which I could not at first comprehend. I had been taken to visit my maternal great grandmother only as she lay on her deathbed. Prior to this there was little mention of her existence, and only rare visits where our precise relationship had never been satisfactorily explained. It was only much later that I understood that great grandmother, a survivor of indenture, had become a social outcaste because she had left my great grandfather and had run off with a man belonging to the religion of the enemy (Hinduism). She had been 'independent' and 'disobedient' and the price for that was total ostracism from the rest of the 'family'. But when researching this thesis I realised that great grandmother was not unusual in her behaviour. Among her contemporaries, the frequent change in lovers and husbands was perfectly acceptable. It was only afterwards that her actions attracted scowls of disapproval, and gradually there was the elimination of her presence from all familial gatherings and social events. Eventually, there resulted a similar incredible silence about all women's marital and extra-marital affairs during indenture. Thus the only view of our ancestresses reaching contemporary Indo-Fijian women like myself was that of 'victim'.

From the perspective of a late twentieth century Indo-Fijian woman, the analytical problems of describing and explaining the historical situation of Indian women in the early years of Fiji's colonial history were overwhelming. In no sense did I wish to see these women as 'victims'. But they were not 'non-victims' either. They were restricted by a whole array of structural constraints that could not fail to make them into 'victims'. But women refused to see themselves

as passive and docile stereotypes. The written literature shows that Indian women expressed their anger in various ways, none of which was recognised as resistance by our male historians who were far too concerned with defining political protest as 'strike action', or with describing various individual acts of violence on the part of men against those who ruled. Women's resistance to exploitation and oppression was expressed by them in many different ways, most of which eluded contemporary male-biased analysts. From my perspective therefore, and in terms of what I wished to know, a different set of analytical tools had to be constructed to deal with the historical situation of Indian women workers and to discover the meaning of their labour participation within the context of colonialism, capitalist investment and male dominance.

As a consequence of the analysis of the historical accounts, the condition of Indian women who arrived in Fiji to work under contractual servitude called 'indenture' can be described thus: they were young (mostly 19-26 years of age); they defined themselves as 'single' (63.9 per cent of adult women); the majority were agriculturalists; they were contracted to work as 'waged' labour and they formed only about 30 per cent of the adult labour force. Furthermore, despite their contractual obligation to engage in waged labour, Indian women were also expected to undertake housework and, where relevant, childcare. Moreover, Indian women were recognised as having a colour attribute by white plantation managers, and women's responses to their position as workers on plantations were expressed in terms of gender, colour and class.

The policy was to remove women from fieldwork after their indentures were over. Instead, they were provided with encouragement to undertake domestic work. Despite this, many women continued to work as 'free' waged labour. Upon the cancellation of all indentures in 1920 women gradually disappeared altogether from waged work, becoming subsistence gardeners on family canefarms. The women who moved into towns found it difficult to obtain waged work, eventually offering their labour power for sale as domestic servants, or their bodies as prostitutes. A few were hawkers and proprietors of retail outlets but most defined themselves as housewives. Within a period of about five years Indian

women's labour participation shifted from that of waged work on plantations to housework in the home.

2. Analytic Frameworks

In order to explore whether the fact of 'femininity' of any group of women could, within certain social relations, lead to accumulation of wealth, there is an established body of literature to which one could refer. This literature, although closely connected, is significant for the different analytical emphases on the material roots of oppression of human beings historically. The three analytical frameworks utilised in this thesis are : Marxist Thought, Feminist Theory and Third World/Black Analysis. For a description of the association between the fact of 'femininity' and wealth accumulation in Fiji it is necessary first to explore the precise usefulness of each of these analytical frameworks for my thesis question.

(i). The usefulness of the Marxist Framework for an analysis of Indian women's labour in Fiji.

It must be stressed at this point that although none of the authors referred to below may consider themselves to be marxists, I have categorised them within this analytical framework because their usefulness to me in this thesis stems from their ability to stretch the marxist method. Within the marxist tradition therefore, the theorists useful to this study were Frederick Engels, Maria Mies, and Stephanie Coontz and Peta Henderson. Salvatore Cucciari is also referred to for an analysis of kinship and marriage which was relevant for a closer examination of the works of all four. In the case of Engels, the work referred to was parts of The Origin of the Family Private Property and the State (1985 ed). Mies' work Patriarchy and the Accumulation on a World Scale (1986) was also immensely useful: and Coontz and Henderson's paper 'Property Forms, Political Power and Female Labour in the Origins of Class and State Societies' (1986) was particularly relevant. Cucciari's article, 'The gender revolution and the transition from bisexual horde to partilocal band: the origins of gender hierarchy', (1981) cut across all the references cited above and served to broaden my ideas about the nature of female subordination and the conditions under which it arose.

In The Origin of the Family Private Property and the State Engels makes two significant points which are crucial for a materialist analysis of women's oppression. The first appears in the Preface to the First Edition:

'According to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life. This, again, is of a twofold character: on the one side, the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social organisation under which the people of a particular historical epoch and a particular country live is determined by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labour on the one hand and of the family on the other.'

(Engels op cit pp 35-36).

This statement has often been used by feminists to illustrate how important the notion of 'reproduction' is in marxist thought. Yet, at the same time, it had become increasingly clear to contemporary feminists that while 'production' was analysed by Marx and marxists in great depth and detail, the same could not be said about 'reproduction'. Within marxist thought it was difficult even to define the notion of 'reproduction', intertwined as it was with biology, emotion and nurturance: aspects outside the realm of marxist analysis of 'labour'. Nevertheless, despite this shortcoming it was evident that production and reproduction were two sides of the same coin, and although Marx and Engels had not managed to work through the conceptual difficulties, the feminists were willing to try.

The second statement was:

'And now that large-scale industry has taken the wife out of the home and into the labour market and into the factory, and made her often the breadwinner of the family, no basis for any kind of male supremacy is left in the proletarian household, except, perhaps, for something of the brutality toward women that has spread since the introduction of monogamy' (ibid p 103).

This statement implied (and Engels repeatedly returns to the notion of the proletarian wife being 'free' compared to the bourgeois wife) that women's entry into public production, where they worked for a 'wage', would be the first step towards emancipation. In my study, i.e. the case of Indian women waged workers in Fiji, this certainly appeared to be a correct observation once the industrial plantation got under way, for most women were not only 'free' to earn a wage, they expressed their freedom in overt and covert ways.

The usefulness of Engels' work to this research exercise was therefore provided by his statements that production and reproduction were interlinked in the materialist conception, and that with the entry of women into public industry the material roots of women's oppression as wives would be removed. Using this general analytical framework Indian women could be viewed as both producers and reproducers. In terms of the possibility of emancipation, as waged workers they had the possibility of being relatively free of male monopoly over paid work and thus from most aspects of male dominance. Furthermore, after their indentures were cancelled, their participation in family life could be viewed as a 'productive' activity: as much as their previous participation in waged work.

But this significance of Indian women's labour was not measured in monetary or political terms, despite Engels edict that all women could become free in public production. There appeared to be a discrepancy between Engels' predictions about the productive activities of all women, and the actual experience of Indian women's work conditions in Fiji, evidence of which was derived from the fieldwork. This was not, however, seen to be a major problem in the initial stages of this research. It was recognised that Indian women's emancipation in Fiji could have been severely constrained by their structural position as workers. It could also have been affected by the outsiders' view of them as 'housewives' regardless of their structural position as workers and this also limited women's involvement in paid work. Engels' work needed further investigation before its precise usefulness to this thesis could be assessed.

The contemporary analysis of Coontz and Henderson has been used in this thesis to map out the relationship between the emergence of 'kin-corporate property' and the subordination of women. This is significant for an analysis of Indian women's position as 'single' workers who were then obliged to become attached to men as 'wives' or concubines. As 'single' women, Indian women could not be made into property, but the attachment to men permitted surplus wealth to be accumulated. In my view wealth accumulation can only be studied with reference to the process of 'becoming' a wife or concubine. Coontz and Henderson postulate that the origins of male dominance appear to be connected to the process of ranking internal to many 'primitive' societies and to a type of property that preceded private property (Coontz and Henderson op cit p 110). Division of labour occurred at first with no sign of inequality but it did lead to specialisation, especially in horticulture, and the rigid separation of one sex by another occurred as a consequence of gradual accumulation of property held by the corporate kin group accessible to members but inaccessible to non-members. They suggest that the effect of kin corporate property was tied to the elaboration of marriage systems and residence rules, leading to a contradiction between owner and producer. When men moved to their wives' residence group after marriage, they became producers within the kin corporate group in which they were not owners. When females moved, the same applied to them. They argue that the roots of female subordination lie in 1) the growth of an incentive for property-owning kin corporations to privatize female productive and reproductive capacities and 2) the greater expansionary potential of kin corporations where women were the moveable partners at marriage. Firm and permanent social differentiation among kin corporations or subgroups permitted the formation of classes and thus women's role took into account both their class as well as their sex (ibid pp 111-112). Coontz and Henderson then explain how early human social organisations were small, loosely organised groups who shared and cooperated for survival. In such social formations there was probably an informal division of labour by sex especially among those who had adopted projectile weapons or other technology which permitted the specialisation between gathering and collecting and hunting to take place. It was a matter of social convenience that hunters were male (ibid p 114).

Coontz and Henderson's work on the historical origins of male domination is useful for an analysis of Indian women in Fiji for two reasons. First, because mainly 'single' workers were transported, it is important to find out what exactly leads to male dominance in a context where legally all labourers, male and female, had the same status. In such a context both women and men appear as individuals within the plantation hierarchy. Furthermore, the Indians in Fiji were actively discouraged from marrying, a not unusual phenomenon within slavery and in/voluntary labour migrations. The documents show that marriages between men and women could not take place without the permission of the employer. Furthermore, even if permission had been sought it was quite frequently denied on the grounds that 'single' people were required as plantation labour, not those who were married or in partnerships. In this situation therefore it was useful to apply the analysis of Coontz and Henderson of the preconditions of male dominance.

From their work it appeared that the subordination of women occurred with the development of sexual division of labour and the possession of property by the kin group. Theoretically speaking, according to this view, women in Fiji would have had the potential to be free from male dominance because of the absence of kin, and therefore any male-dominated group would be unable to hold any form of property.

The notion of property is a significant one as far as marxist, feminist and third world scholarship is concerned. In Marxist Social Theory property relations and forms of property have central significance. Marx did not regard property only as the possibility for the owner to exercise property rights, or as an object of such activity, but as an essential relationship which is central to the notion of classes and social strata. In terms of this, the ownership of the means of production is vitally significant. Marx and Engels pointed out that changes in the forms of property mark successive 'modes' of production (Grundrisse: 1973 p 495 cited in Bottomore (1983 p 399)). Although the rigid separation of the various 'stages' of history is now no longer used by marxists, the notion of property as either 'rights over' or as juridical possession is hotly debated

within the contemporary political and social contexts (Bottomore ibid).

The marxist notion of property has recently been reconceptualised by Maria Mies who suggests that the first and foremost property relation in human history was the relation between women and men (Mies op cit 1986). Mies extends Engels' statement that the first class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamian marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male, by arguing that there was not merely a close correlation between the rise of property and the surrender of women; by surrendering women themselves became property. Mies' work is particularly valuable for the insights gained from third world and anthropological literature which locates the notion of property at the very centre of the relation between women and men. As Mies points out...

one finds numerous examples that show that...hunters (in the domestic communities) not only kidnapped and appropriated people whom they surprised in the jungle, but they also organised razzias into other villages to kidnap women. The women thus appropriated did not become members of the community, but were usually privately appropriated by the leader of the expedition, who either use them as slaves to work for him, or sell them against bridewealth to other villages. These kidnapped women thus became a direct source for the accumulation of private property' (ibid p 64).

Mies argues that female slaves were valuable for two reasons: they could do agricultural work and they could produce more slaves (ibid p 65). In inter-village or clan raids, men might be slain but women were taken captive. Mies suggests that it was men's monopoly over arms that permitted the dominance over women to take place:

'In the last analysis, we can attribute the assymmetrical division of labour between women and men to this predatory mode of production, or rather appropriation, which is based on the male monopoly over means of coercion, that is, arms, and on direct violence by means of which permanent relations of exploitation and dominance between the sexes were created and maintained' (ibid).

Women were valuable as property because they produced life which was the first surplus. This was then alienated from women by men by various types of compulsion. Mies' notion of women as property includes the marxist concept of means of production and extends it so that women themselves are seen as means of production and men as owners/controllers of this.

Mies' idea of women as property is significant for an analysis of Indian women in Fiji for several reasons: first of all, in spite of Indian women arriving in Fiji as indentured workers in their own right, there was no doubt that they were regarded as property. This was articulated in two ways: as women they were assumed to be property of men even though there were no kin present to exercise this right of proprietorship within the Fijian context; and as workers they were the property of their white employers. Secondly, this property relation had its origin in two places: India, where significant social relations based on the dominance and ownership of the female by the male was established practice, and Fiji, here the women's particular work relation defined them as property within the plantation context. Under such circumstances women could be traded as workers and as women. Despite their 'freedom' to enter the indentured labour force, and in spite of the lack of marriage and kin associations, women were defined as property of men through a whole set of constructs, much of which had historical rather than contemporary origins. Finally, the property that was women was protected as wealth by violence. Men retained their property through the use of personal violence and the plantation industrialists retained their property through state regulation and plantation violence which were articulated by them in their role as 'employers' of labour. Although Indian women arrived in Fiji as single, young, indentured plantation workers there were certain structural constraints that interfered with their claim to freedom from ownership. The conception of them as property was mediated by actual physical and potential male violence.

In any discussion of male dominance in the anthropological literature, the concept of kinship is particularly crucial. Engels, Coontz and Henderson and Mies all agree that the notion of kinship has embedded within it gender differentiation. However, although it is understood

that gender is central to kinship it is not so clear how male dominance is tied to gender differentiation. Cucciari's recent work could be used to explore the precise association between gender and kinship. He argues that 'Kinship- a sociocultural system of differentially distributed rights, duties and statuses, founded on an ideology of shared substances- is inextricably linked to gender categories', and that in turn, gender is reproduced by the kinship system, particularly by the marriage relation, as kinship cannot function without gender (Cucciari op cit p36). Kinship is a 'sex-specific social system' (ibid). Without ideas about gender difference it would be difficult to articulate notions about 'kinship'.

Cucciari speculates that gender hierarchy (which is different from gender differentiation) was originally created upon the exchange of women. Women could only be exchanged once children were exchanged. Adults had power over children which enabled them to be exchanged. But the sexual division of labour that arose as a consequence of women's exclusive responsibility for the bearing and suckling of children elevated them to the sphere of the sacred, barring men from any participation in child tendering. The further division of labour that this entailed (men as foragers and women as tenderers) led to a whole array of gendered dualisms where heterosexuality became dominant and sexuality a powerful social force needing to be controlled. The external domain became male where men were able to control children through alliances between themselves and women. These alliances called for pairing, the notion of marriage, the family, and exogamy. Children were exchanged not only to establish inter-group networks but also to establish mating patterns. Children from outside the collectivity were marked out as different so that they could become future mates. Since men were involved in the exchange, first female children and then women were exchanged, and with the exchange of some adults by other adults the exercise in dominance was complete. At this point gender hierarchy was established and became embedded at the very centre of marriage and kinship (ibid pp 33-70).

Cucciari's ideas are useful because they can be used for an in-depth understanding of the centrality of 'exchange' of women and children for male dominance. It appears that once women and children are

exchanged, either for other women or for goods and services, the process of gender hierarchy is complete. The prestations that take place upon marriage in many countries can be seen as gifts in exchange for women and the products of their labour. This is echoed in the recent work of Harrell and Dickey (1985 pp 105-120) which shows the significance of marriage exchanges for the formation of gender hierarchy. Their research demonstrates that dowry as a form of marriage transaction occurs only in 4 per cent of the 563 societies listed in the Atlas of World Cultures, but bridewealth is given in 266 cultures. Out of the total 63 require brideservice.

Harrell and Dickey's explanations for the appearance of dowry can be extended, revealing that marriage prestations in goods are symbols for the exchange of wealth vested in women. They have argued that dowry can be payment or compensation for 'unproductive' women; or it can serve as moveable or immoveable property inheritance at marriage or at the death of parents; it can be used as a form of competition between male heirs; it can be means to protect property for male heirs by consolidating it; it can be a conjugal fund for the couple or the couple's children or for the support of the groom's family. Dowry does not necessarily occur in societies where women are exclusively involved in housework. Sometimes dowry payments are given where women carry out agricultural work. My own research shows that in many contexts the expectation of dowry is always present and the demands that this be paid become more vocal as competition for scarce resources increases. In parts of India for example, unsatisfied dowry demands can lead to feuds between in-laws and in extreme cases, to the murder of the bride.

It must be pointed out however that dowry is just one form of marriage exchange. Its appearance coincides with notions about wealth accumulation and the importance of marriage as a method by which wealth can be gained. Even where no actual material wealth is exchanged the symbolic significance of dowry appears to be central to definitions of masculinity and femininity. Since wealth comes with the woman and passes to the man's family or to the conjugal fund the value of women is understood, although rarely stated or acknowledged. On the contrary women can be illtreated and violated even though they have

brought a dowry as well as the potential wealth in children- the future of the community.

Brideprice or bridewealth can also be seen as an exchange or a transaction between the kin of the groom and the kin of the bride (Goody and Tambiah: 1973 p 1). A gift is given by the groom or his kin directly to the bride and this may form part of the collective conjugal fund. Comaroff has recently argued that bridewealth occurs in societies where there is limited 'hierarchization' due to the prevalence of hoe rather than plough agriculture and one marriage is like any other in terms of status (Comaroff 1980 p 7). Comaroff's point that terms such as 'dowry' and 'bridewealth' tell us little more than the source and destination of the transfers, leaving out dimensions of 'content, context and meaning' (ibid p 10) is a valid one. In general terms one can describe the transactions that take place upon marriage and compare them with the technology and social relations within the contexts in which they occur but these tell us little about the nature of gender relations and the extent of male or female dominance and subordination. Further, it gives us little idea of whether dowry and bridewealth are specific ways of exchanging wealth/women, or women, or wealth. From the existing literature it appears that the societies awarding bridewealth hold women in esteem while those giving dowry treat women as subordinate and 'unproductive' whose kin must pay a man to get rid of them. Boserup maintains for example that societies with plough agriculture developed dowry systems whereas where hoe cultivation developed there was the increasing evidence of bridewealth (Boserup 1970). Plough technology was used to eliminate women from the land but the hoe enabled women to take part in 'production'. Obviously women who were 'producers' were more valued and thus wealth was paid for them at marriage.

Yet we can see from the actual experience of women, usually articulated by women from the social formations referred to in the western literature on marriage prestations (see for example Morgan: *Sisterhood is Global* 1985), that neither dowry-paying societies nor those that give bridewealth treat their women differently. In both contexts women are seen as subordinate to men, notwithstanding individual women's ability to transcend male dominance within specific

social formations. Neither of the exchanges that occur at marriage appear to have lessened the subordination of women to men in economic, political and social matters. For this reason the exchanges that take place at marriage must be analysed within the framework of male dominance and female subordination and the indigenous definitions of what is 'productive' activity and what is not.

Cucciari's analysis of the centrality of heterosexual marriage to kinship and the quality and quantity of exchange that appears to mediate this relation is useful for my study of Indian women in Fiji because my field results show that between 1879 and 1930 heterosexual coupling was marked first of all through the payment of a brideprice, and later by the payment of a dowry. During indenture and for a few years after 1920 the 'marriages' that took place were marked by the payment of money and gifts from the groom to the bride's father. Although the payment of a brideprice for women was not the norm in the areas of India from whence the labourers came, the scarcity of women in Fiji compelled men to make a payment for a wife. Once the sexual balance was restored however, the marriage prestation became 'dowry', and was taken by the bride's parents to the groom. This suggests that under conditions of scarcity where the number of women who can generate wealth is limited for some reason, the price that women or their kin can command is high. Under such conditions much wealth can be made by some men through the bartering of women. Under conditions of abundance of women however, a different set of men make money. Instead of brideprice, dowry is paid and the men acquiring women also acquire wealth in things other than what the women can produce through their labour. Levi-Strauss was correct in arguing that marriage alienations derive their meaning as a consequence of their location in the general logic of exchange in social affairs in general (Levi Strauss 1969 cited in Comaroff op cit). But the 'general logic' of exchange in the social whole centres upon the exchange involving women. In the case of Fiji it will be shown clearly that in Fiji between 1879 to 1930, the wealth that was accumulated by men was made possible, among other things, through the exchange of women. In this context it is difficult to discuss production, circulation and distribution without also discussing the formal and informal exchanges that take place between men and in some cases between women and men at

marriage. The wealth that is exchanged at marriage includes women's potential to bear children as well as their ability to provide labour and services within the conjugal household.

In general terms the works of Engels, Coontz and Henderson, Mies and Cucciari can be used to theorise several important aspects of Indian women's work participation in Fiji. First of all it is clear that Indian women indentured workers had the ability to earn money in Fiji and were involved in public production which entailed their formal separation from the domestic arena. This gave them some 'freedom' to behave as they pleased because they earned money independently of men. Thus for their basic needs they did not have to rely on a man. And since they were not permitted to be married they could exercise their independence even more directly. This inevitably had implications for the way they viewed themselves.

As women without husbands and without kin, Indian women were not bound of necessity by the rules of kinship which forbade a single life and promoted marriage. Nevertheless, because there was a scarcity of women, the partnerships that were formed took on the appearance of a business transaction, with money frequently changing hands between men, and often between women and men for the possession of women. There was not only a blackmarket in women, there was also widespread bartering of female children. Thus, while the lack of kin networks freed women from marriage, they also freed men from kin sanctions which might have otherwise protected women. Women were bought and sold as property even though women themselves were able to exercise some autonomy within this overall process. Thus, to extend Engels' thesis that women became much freer upon entering the proletarian class, the argument can be made that although there is a possibility that women will not be subordinate to men because of their ability to earn money and because they appeared as individual labourers, in actuality this is limited due to male dominance which is exercised over women for the purposes of wealth accumulation. Women are seen as property which can be exchanged or traded for a profit. The work of the marxists was useful in seeing how 'femininity' was significant in wealth accumulation. In the Fiji case this accumulation (property) was kept

in place by male violence and the nature of plantation and farm enterprise.

(ii) Feminist Theories and Indian women workers.

One of the most significant aspects of theorising about women's subordination that has been done by feminists in recent years has been the concentration on the notion of 'reproduction'. It was recognised that although Marx and Engels had stated that both production of things and the production of people were significant in the materialist conception of history, the feminist critique was that 'reproduction' had not been paid as much attention as 'production' in the marxist literature. Much of the feminist critique came from within marxist scholarship however, and over the past twenty five years women scholars have attempted to deal conceptually with women's work outside of the paid labour force. Of necessity, this has involved the study of women's work within the capitalist mode of production, although, as it will become clear presently, this debate has much to offer the study of women in pre-capitalist or transitional contexts such as Fiji. I refer only to aspects of the domestic labour debate that illuminate the period of transition between two distinct modes of production, and also those which illustrate the labour process which hitherto has been situated outside of capitalism as a mode of production, namely 'housework'.

The arguments about domestic labour first began among marxists who wished to analyse the significance of housework for capital. Margaret Benston (1969 pp 13-27), Peggy Morton (1971 pp 211-227) and Maria Dalla Costa and Selma James (1972) all began by stating that women's oppression in capitalist society was caused by their participation in unpaid domestic labour and not by 'ideology' or attitudes. Women were actual producers in the home despite their lack of payment. What they produced was consumed in the home, nevertheless their ability to work in the home producing 'use-values' enabled the male breadwinner to offer his labour power for sale to the capitalist for a wage that was below the cost of reproduction. Benston also argued that women served as a 'reserve army', being brought out into the labour force when needed and withdrawn when there was a sufficient number of men looking for work. Dalla Costa and Selma James argued that since women produced

goods and services in the home for the waged earner who was then exploited by the capitalists, women should be paid a wage for the work they did. This was a political platform and won a lot of support among western feminists who thought that women should not have to enter public production to be able to claim a wage.

Although there were many problems in the arguments it was becoming increasingly clear as they progressed through the 1970s that women's work in the home could not be seen only as being undertaken for 'love' but actually benefitted the recipients of this service. Harry Secombe (1973 pp 3-26) argued that the labour of women in the home produced value (defined as the objectification or materialisation of abstract labour, the form of appearance of which is the exchange value of a commodity). But, said Secombe, although women produced value, they were not 'productive' in the marxist sense because they did not take the products of their labour (labour power) into the sphere of exchange.

John Harrison and Jean Gardiner argued from a different perspective. In two separate articles written in 1973 and 1975 Harrison and Gardiner shared a theoretical position in which domestic labour was viewed as a 'client mode' linked to the capitalist mode of production. Domestic labour produced use-values for capitalists and would eventually be dominated by capitalist relations of production. The client mode was dependent upon capitalist relations for its reproduction or continuation. Thus women were a separate class of people who produced surplus labour over and above their own needs and this was appropriated by the capitalists through their husbands' labour power. Gardiner's position was that women were forced to work within the family domain through a mixture of economics, ideology and psychology. They contributed to the production of surplus value by keeping the cost of necessary labour to below subsistence levels. Although housework did not create value in marxist terms it nevertheless contributed to surplus value by keeping the value of labour power down.

In 1977 Jane Humphries extended this thesis and argued that the working class family with its subordinate and unpaid housewife

persisted because it offered workers security and cohesion in an alienating capitalist-dominated world (1977 p 255). The family could also be seen as a platform from where the working classes could wage a struggle against capitalism. Thus the 'family' could not be seen only as functional for capital but also as an institution in opposition to capital because it resisted 'the disciplinary power of the market' (ibid). Under these circumstances men resisted the entry of women in the paid workforce and continued the fight to maintain the idea of the family with its unpaid women workers (ibid).

In 1981 Heidi Hartmann offered another view. She argued that women's overwhelming responsibilities in the home for no pay was as a consequence of the coinciding interests of both capitalism and 'patriarchy' which she defined as 'a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women' (Hartmann in Sargent 1981 p 14). Patriarchy involves men's control of women's labour power (ibid). By offering a woman-specific material base for women's subordination in the family Hartmann removed it from the realm of both functionalism and ideology. The significance of her arguments rested on the presuppositions that men's control of women was maintained by denying them access to necessary economic productive resources and by restricting women's sexuality. In this, men's interests were in opposition to the capitalists who would have liked to break down the barriers to any type of unfree and unwaged labour. In contrast to Humphries therefore, Hartmann believed that the family was a site of struggle, not solidarity.

In the 1980s the arguments took a dramatic turn mainly due to a number of publications of a parallel debate which had been occurring among third world scholars since the 1960s. This third world debate was not about domestic labour of the type discussed by the domestic labour scholars but about a similar aspect of unfree labour- peasant agricultural production in the colonies and neo-colonies. The debate, known as the 'modes of production' debates focussed on the identification of a 'capitalist mode of production' and its conditions of existence. The central question was whether India and other similar

countries of the third world could be defined as 'capitalist' or 'pre-capitalist' due to the lack of transformation of pre-capitalist relations of production even within a capitalist context. Within the specific context of India a whole array of social relations were indicated- wage relations, semi-feudal, feudal, colonial and even communal. This implied that although capitalist investment had taken place in India for several centuries the relations of production had not necessarily been transformed into capitalist relations, indicating either that the transition was incomplete or that it was possible for several 'modes' to be retained within one social formation.

These debates were followed with keen interest by third world feminists who had also become aware of the domestic labour debates through their feminist networks. Many of these feminists also had access to contemporary anthropological literature of scholars such as Claude Meillassoux, Marshall Sahlins and Eleanor Leacock and thus attempts were made to work seriously through the theoretical morass in which individual analysts were beginning to flounder.

Early in 1980 Gita Sen published a paper in which she critiqued Jane Humphries notion of 'family'. Sen argued that Humphries had left out of the analysis the situation of unmarried women who out of necessity had a direct relation to waged work. For these women protective legislation had weakened their position. Furthermore different women held different positions within the family. The condition of the senior mother-in-law could not be viewed as similar to the junior wife or daughter-in-law and thus the differences between women could not be neglected. The most important difference within a family was not between those who 'worked' and those who did not 'work', but between those who had access to and a claim to subsistence goods (1980 p 84). Under capitalism women's biological capacity to bear children was translated in a complex way into an intensified division of labour based on sex, life-cycle stage and relative position in the waged working class. Her view, which was a new one at the time and preceded even Hartmann's definition of 'patriarchy', was that women's responsibility for tasks such as cooking and cleaning pre-dated capitalism and were historical givens on which the sexual division of labour under capitalism was built (ibid).

This argument was put more succinctly by anthropologist Claude Meillassoux who in 1981 offered the English translation of his 1975 book, Maidens, Meal and Money: capitalism in the domestic community (1981). Meillassoux argued in reference to pre-colonial and colonial West Africa and the transformation of African peasants into commodity producers that although in the analysis of 19th century capitalism the lack of a theory of reproduction of labour power did not undermine Marx's theory of labour in a critical way, an adjustment was required to reintroduce the process of reproduction of labour power into the model (ibid p xii). In this the analysis of the 'domestic community' was essential because it was 'indeed the only economic and social system which manages the physical reproduction of the producers and social reproduction at large through a comprehensive set of institutions, by the ordered manipulation of the living means of reproduction, that is: women' (ibid and p xiii). He added that none of the commonly-known modes of production, e.g. feudalism, slavery or capitalism knew such regulating and correcting built-in mechanisms governing the process of reproduction....

'On the contrary, in the last analysis, we find that all modern modes of production, all classes of societies depend, for the supply of labour power, on the domestic community. As for capitalism, it depends both on the domestic communities of the colonised countries and on its modern transformation, the family, which still maintains its reproductive functions although deprived of its productive ones.' (ibid p xiv).

Meillassoux thought that the domestic relations of production should be considered as the organic basis of feudalism, slavery as well as of capitalism and bureaucratic socialism and that domestic relations had been 'organically integrated' into the development of all modes of production (ibid). The domestic relations of production involved a property dimension which was established through the exchange of women through both violent and peaceful means for the purposes of the reproduction of the species. He argued also for the replacement of the term 'property' by 'patrimony' in cases where goods and services were

shared and transferred willingly to denote the absence of a 'counter-claim'.

Thus Meillassoux's ideas were little different from those of Mies and Cucciari who also identified the exchange of women as property for the purposes of wealth accumulation. This is not surprising since these thinkers came from within the marxist/anthropological paradigm which was beginning to be influenced dramatically by feminist theories. It was argued that wealth consisted of both labour and products of labour, including children. Meillassoux's ideas incorporated a third dimension- the concept of 'property' in its full meaning contained the rights of 'usus, fructus, and abuses' and was linked to the market economy which allowed products to be 'alienated and transformed into commodities' (ibid p 36). The market economy was not confined to capitalism only but had operated since time immemorial, at the centre of which was the trading in women themselves.

The work of the domestic labour scholars, and of Meillassoux and others, was useful in the conceptualisation of women as workers within the household, and the notion that wealth was produced by women and appropriated by capitalists through men. Less clear, however, was the reason for the original emergence of women as unpaid and un-valued workers. How was it historically possible that women's capacity to bring children into the world enabled men to dominate them, trade them in, and exploit them in most social contexts? For a proper understanding of this a closer examination of the concept 'reproduction' was required.

At the University of Sussex, three women had conceptualised the term 'reproduction' more concisely. Felicity Edholm, Olivia Harris and Kate Young published a paper in the Critique of Anthropology (1977 pp 101-130) which defined clearly the different usages of the term. First of all they conceptualised it in terms of 'social reproduction', i.e. the reproduction of the mode of production; secondly they defined 'reproduction' as 'human or biological reproduction'; and finally they used it to refer to the 'maintenance of the labour force' (members of the family). They argued that it was only by separating the concept 'reproduction' in terms of its different associations with different

types of productive activity could one come to understand the significance of women to life (production) itself. Within this diverse array of 'productive activity' different constraints were put on women and their unique capacity to regenerate human labour in order to own and/or control its use. Thus in any analysis of women's oppression or exploitation scholars had to separate out the different ways in which women produced and to attempt to understand the inter-connectedness of different types of production. Unlike the orthodox marxist analysis, this perspective served to delimit the boundaries within which the debate took place. Women's productive activity was central to the mode of production analysis itself. From this framework could be discussed aspects such as sexual division of labour, specialisation of work, capitalist or socialist production, as well as sexuality, emotion and nurturance. Edholm, Harris and Young provided a new method of analysis of women's oppression.

A similar perspective was provided by Alison Jagger and William McBride who argued that there was no rational justification for separating out certain human activities under the concept of reproduction and that the very distinction between production and reproduction is an 'invidious and male-biased distinction' (Jagger and McBride 1985 p 185). However, in my view, an analytical distinction is useful for the purposes of intellectual clarity. In a situation where we are thinking about male dominance it is important to know the different ways in which women are subordinated. For this reason we have to be clear in our minds about the different labour processes in which women are involved- as bearers and carers of human beings as well as actual producers of goods in the public or private arena. In this thesis the term (re)production (ibid) is used to denote these different labour processes.

In general terms the feminist contribution to this thesis stems from the analysis of 'reproduction' (labour) and wealth accumulation. The scholars involved in the domestic labour debate argued that women's work in the home subsidised capital and cheapened the value of labour power, a point that is borne out by my study of Indian women's work in Fiji. The anthropologists and third world scholars showed how crucial the domestic sphere was in wealth accumulation, and how important it

was to know the difference between the types of work that women did. Once it could be shown that women's production in biology, nurturing, and sexuality was no different from their production for a wage, then one could argue for a smashing of the fictive boundary between production and reproduction. In the case of Fiji the evidence shows that capitalists themselves created these fictive boundaries to make a profit, and that Indian men's interests were served by maintaining it.

(iii) Black/Third World Analysis and Indian women's labour.

Although the conceptualisation of gender and class was handled ably by the feminist and marxist scholars, it was less clear how racism and/or ethnicity had a bearing on the general debates. The marxist scholars had been unable adequately to theorise the experience of racism that had ravaged the lives of millions of workers of colour, preferring to analyse their situation in terms of their structural position as proletarians rather than as blacks. Similarly, the feminist movement had long been savagely divided by the politics of colour to the extent that many black women refused to define themselves as feminists as a consequence of colour prejudice within the movement as well as within the theory.

For this thesis an adequate explanation had to be found for the ways in which Indian women in Fiji were exploited and oppressed not merely as a consequence of their condition of servitude but also because they were coloured working women. Black people in general were paid less as a consequence of a complex set of exploitative mechanisms in which the colour attribute was significant. In the case of Fiji it was quite clearly stated by the major employer of Indian labourers that coloured workers were preferred because of their cheapness. It was the cheapness of the Indian farmer after indenture that led to the demise of the white sugarcane planter by the early 1920s. Thus the notion of colour could not merely be tacked on at the end of the analysis. It was a fundamental aspect of theorising; the more so because Indian women were viewed ambivalently by their white masters. On the one hand they were subservient and despised workers, on the other they were exotic, nubile and beautiful women. Their bodies were firm and their sexuality alluring. It would have been difficult to ignore the presence of women of colour on plantations, leading to what could be

described as the 'sexual double-standard'. Indians were exploited but women could use their sexuality to by-pass absolute exploitation. At the same time however, precisely because of women's structural position as workers, their sexuality was always a potential danger for it could be used as an excuse for sexual abuse and rape. Working women had to be careful in peddling their sexuality for personal gain. The rules were still made by men.

This complex phenomenon of black femininity had not been explored by the marxists and western feminists. For this reason the black literature and third world analysis were referred to in order to conceptualise the interconnectedness of colour/class/gender in sugar production in Fiji. I felt that the colour dimension could have a bearing on the methods by which Indian women were exploited in the labour processes on plantations and farms. Besides this, only black scholarship had conceptualised the notion of worker resistance in all its different forms. This had not been a feature of marxist and western feminist analysis which had approached the question of resistance in terms of either its public and (often) legitimate expression of strike action, or in terms of agitation for recognition and payment for work done. There was little analysis of the diverse ways in which workers could abstain from production for their bosses under conditions of extreme enslavement. Much of the Black literature explored this dimension and these ideas could also be used to illuminate the resistance strategies of another group of enslaved workers- women in the home.

From this perspective Angela Davis' work, Women, Race and Class (1981) was a significant piece of theorising. Davis clearly articulated the problems women of colour faced as workers and as women. Referring to both enslavement and emancipation, Davis argued for colour politics to be seen as a prime hindrance to women's advancement economically, politically and socially. The dimension of colour was significant for separating out white women from black women in their understanding and conceptualisation of gender difference. It was significant for black men's perception of the place of black women in comparison with white women (see for example Eldridge Cleaver Soul on Ice 1979), and it was a crucial dimension in white men's allocation of workers in the

production hierarchy. Moreover, in terms of resistance, it was quite clear that workers of colour protested their exploitation in response to their structural position in the labour process. Black male workers in the field would set down their tools or run away, but the household servants learnt to read, to memorise and to 'go slow'. Black women learnt to keep the family fires burning, and, in extreme cases, to kill their infants rather than rear them for enslavement. Many of these work and resistance strategies were used by bonded Indian women too, and should be analysed in that light.

Although, strictly speaking, the series of debates called the 'modes of production' debate were not directly concerned with issues of colour, they did emphasise the phenomenon of colonialism (see for example Brewer (1980) and Taylor 1979). As such it was inevitable that concerns about the relative cheapness of third world labour as a consequence of colour (the terms 'culture' and 'race' have also been used to refer to colour), and the pillage of raw materials and wealth from people with limited ability to defend themselves would be part of the analysis. For the purposes of this thesis the 'modes of production' debates were useful to conceptualise the difficulties that arose from viewing certain labour processes as 'complete' rather than 'transitional'. In other words, in situations where particular relations of production had been imposed upon people involved in different ways of doing things, explanations had to be found for the simultaneous operation of different labour processes for the purposes of production. Thus beliefs, ideas and activities could come from different theories about the way things should be done, and the resulting tension had the consequence of pulling women, who were central to production itself, in different directions.

The Fiji evidence showed that the way that the labour processes were organised impinged upon the ability of women to exercise their autonomy. Their labour involvement was influenced by their previous history as agricultural women of India, by the industrial plantation labour process and by anti-women legislation that had been designed to control another group of women in Fiji- the native Fijian women. Under these circumstances, it was important to ensure that the mode of production under discussion was precisely expressed because failure to

do this would entail the construction of mistaken notions about women's work and the possibility of their emancipation. For this reason, Robert Miles' discussion of 'free' and 'unfree' labour in capitalism (1987) was referred to for the analysis of 'modes of production' in colonial Fiji. His argument was extended here to define women's labour in the home as 'unfree' labour and therefore incompatible with the marxist definition of the Capitalist Mode of Production'. This position is also used in this thesis to critique recent work on Fiji which indicates that the transition to capitalism was complete upon the arrival of indentured 'waged' workers.

The contribution of male scholarship in Fiji to this thesis cannot be ignored. This study originated due to my total dissatisfaction and annoyance with the way men had either ignored, or down-played the significance of women's work in Fiji. Fiji had always been described as a 'plural' society, and until marxist academics began to challenge this view, the popular divisions between people were viewed as being constructed by 'race politics' [see for example Gillion (1962), Ali (1980), and Naidu 1980)]. In this view Indian labourers were seen to respond to their exploitation as a 'race' of people and their political expression reflected this response. Although colonialism was attacked for its 'racism', it was not recognised that the construct of 'race' had itself been a deliberate formulation on the part of colonial and capitalist agents. By remaining at the level of 'race' analysis, the critics of colonialism reproduced the oppressors' own constructs.

However the marxist approaches in recent Fijian scholarship were meant to transcend the question of 'race', replacing it with a mixture of class and 'race'. This served to highlight the significance of the labour process in capitalist relations in Fiji. Unfortunately however, since it could be argued on the basis of marxist literature itself that capitalist relations were not dominant in Fiji due to the large number of 'unfree' and unwaged workers in production, the usefulness of the marxist analysis to an understanding of all aspects of production is limited. Nevertheless, its academic contribution to the inter-connectedness of 'race' and class is indisputable. The works of Sutherland (1984) and Narsey (1979) show that capitalists were able to

make an immense profit during colonialism through their ability to exploit workers of colour in Fiji to a greater degree than the white workers in Australia. The cheapness of labour in Fiji arose as a consequence of whites' belief that black workers needed less to maintain themselves than white workers. In this study therefore, the literature on 'colour' serves to show that under a specific mode of production, or during the period when several different types of production relations persist, the colour attribute, in its association with gender/class can enhance the appropriation, ownership and control of wealth.

In sum, three different sets of theoretical literature were referred to for this thesis. The marxist literature was significant for its method of analysis as well as the notion that an understanding of 'reproduction' and 'production', was crucial for any theory of society, and that the examination of class, state and civil societies require a fundamental grasp of the concept of property in women which is mediated by exchange, kinship and compulsory heterosexual marriage. For the purposes of my case study this is significant for highlighting Indian women's femininity as property.

The feminist contribution to this thesis stemmed from the understanding and exploration of the usage of the term 'reproduction' and the practice of reproducing. Women's unique capacity to regenerate life, as well as labour with their hands has been ignored or insufficiently theorised in previous scholarship. Feminists have shown that without femininity wealth is unlikely to be produced or accumulated. That this is appropriated as well has encouraged feminists to theorise the process of wealth accumulation through power, force, and economic and political advantage. For the purposes of this thesis this view is significant for seeing Indian women in Fiji as labourers and as property.

The Black/Third World analysis has shown that the colour dimension is significant in terms of the structural allocation of people as labourers. As workers, people are already disadvantaged because they have no control over the products of their labour, but as black people they have few legal or political rights. Further, their poverty is

exacerbated by their perceived ability to eat less than whites. The Black/Third World analysis also shows that the difficulty of mounting a concerted resistance to exploitation arises out of the different ways in which people of colour are exploited in the third world. In the curious amalgamation of 'free' and 'unfree' labour processes, there is a limit to the ways in which resistance and protest can be expressed. In terms of Indian women's structural position in Fiji, colour as well as class and gender came into play, although the colour dimension could be expressed separately from gender or class. This expression has always been a problematic feature of the contemporary analysis which has not been able successfully to 'marry' exploitation based on class with that based on colour. The analysis of the colour dimension is significant in this study because of the way in which the property in women enhanced profitability due to their cheapness as coloured workers and due to their fear of racially motivated violence.

It will have become evident from the analysis of the theoretical literature above that the situation of Indian women workers between 1879 and 1930 in Fiji can be explored only with reference to work done by theorists from varied disciplines. However, although the contributions of marxists, western feminists and third world scholars are useful in many ways, a number of serious problems arise if one attempts directly to apply the theories to the practical realities of Indian women's actual participation in waged and unwaged work in Fiji. The inadequacies surface as a consequence of two major theoretical deficiencies in the analyses. First, there is little reference in the marxist or feminist literature referred to above to male violence (brutality), and there is limited conceptualisation in all three areas of theoretical activity of the ways in which disadvantaged men themselves act to keep women 'unfree', by depriving them of the ability to earn money, by refusing them access to public platforms, and by emotional blackmail. In the marxist literature Engels could not deal with brutality. He sidestepped the issue in his discussion of women's emancipation. Coontz and Henderson and Cucciari provided an evolutionary framework within which male violence was only mentioned in passing, if at all, and although Mies argued that women became property as a consequence of male violence as well as exchange of women, it is unclear as to why male violence had to occur at all.

In the marxist feminist literature on domestic labour there was no reference to male violence; the protagonists arguing for a material analysis of women's oppression were unable to see that the male assumption of control of women was dependent on their ability to exercise force. Although women can be seen in their structural location as reproducers of labour power and capital, there is no indication that women are also the targets of male physical and psychological abuse. Male violence can also be viewed in its material context as the exercise of dominance over a 'possession'- i.e. women's bodies. This appeared to have been the case in Fiji where, despite the general worker solidarity that existed on plantations, male violation of women was a malevolent and inescapable part of plantation life. Between 1879 and 1920 Indian men murdered Indian women for running away from relationships, for being polyandrous and for challenging male dominance through their ability to earn money and their view of themselves as prized beings of value. Because of this feature of sexual relations and politics on plantations the theorising of the marxists and feminists was inadequate for my study.

The Black/Third World literature did indeed explore the dimension of plantation violence. However, much of this material concentrated on white planter violation of black women. Any evidence of black male violence towards women was seen in terms of the inability of the black male to cope with the exploitation of their women, and so they articulated their anger in different ways, one of which was focussed specifically on their female counterparts. This perspective is utilised here, but in addition I use the evidence of plantation murders in Fiji to show that men killed women because that was the only way they could cope with the female challenge to their traditional and widely accepted dominance. Male brutality cannot be ignored in any discussion of the material roots of women's oppression because if nothing else is available women can be controlled by outright brutality, or the fear of it. This occurred in Fiji, a matter about which the local scholars (with the exception of Brij Lal (1985a and 1985b), have been surprisingly silent. I have used some radical feminist writings on male brutality (e.g. Hollway et al) to demonstrate that the marxist and marxist feminist discussions of the

labour process is not sufficient to illustrate the connection between the fact of 'femininity' of Indian women in Fiji and the accumulation of wealth.

Thus there are significant gaps in the international and local theoretical and methodological contributions to the analysis of women's labour participation. In order to provide an adequate explanation for the ways in which the fact of 'femininity' led to accumulation of wealth in Fiji between 1879 and 1930 there is the need to develop a specific methodology to articulate the precise ways in which others benefitted from women's exploitation and oppression at work and at home. This is elaborated below.

2. Development of a Methodology.

In order to examine the connection between the 'femininity' of Indian women in Fiji and wealth accumulation between 1879 and 1930 there is a need to address the labour process. Clear distinctions between each labour process in which women participated have to be made so that the articulation between the fact of 'femininity' of women and various production processes can be adequately mapped out. The first distinction that can be made is that between paid and unpaid work; certain labour processes in Fiji were rewarded with payment, while others were undertaken for free. Generally, non-payment was accompanied by a degree of unfreedom whereby workers had to produce under conditions which were mediated by extra-economic means and were marked by legislation, contracts and/or violence. On the other hand, payment was marked by a 'wage' or a 'price' and took place under conditions of 'freedom', i.e. where the worker was not restricted by legislation or contract from offering his or her labour power for sale to anyone.

However there was a third labour process which, although marked by a 'price', was not undertaken under conditions of relative 'freedom'. This labour process, known as indenture, could be seen as a transition between unfree and non-waged labour and free and waged labour. The workers who travelled to Fiji as indentured workers were to work for five years or more under contract on plantations for the same employer, but received a 'wage' which did not reflect costs of

inflation or the increase in the price of everyday basic necessities. It is difficult to see this payment as a 'wage' because it could not cover the costs of reproduction of the workers, many of whom died as a result of malnutrition or starvation, or were repatriated to India within a year as 'incapables'. Thus this payment, although referred to as a 'wage' was more like a nominal sum which had to be subsidised by other forms of sustenance.

Superimposed on the different labour processes characterised by relative 'freedom' of the workers was another labour process which marked plantation production- the domestic labour process. This process was unwaged, rather than partly waged, and was carried out exclusively by women who were either permanently or temporarily attached to men. The women produced and processed goods for consumption in the home and provided services such as housework, care and maintenance of men and children, and sex. On plantations therefore, between 1879 and 1920, two different labour processes were indicated for the indentured workers: first the 'waged' and unfree sugar production process, and secondly the unwaged and unfree domestic production process.

Outside of the plantation socio-economic context, but still within the sugar sector, two other labour processes were indicated. Once indentures were over for individual Indians they could return to India or stay near the plantations either working for a higher wage than that given to indentured workers or growing cane under contract for the millers. The farmers also periodically offered their labour power for sale to the miller. The waged labourer was 'free' in the sense of not being bound by contract like indentured workers (except for cases of Masters and Servants contracts), and the farmer was free to farm provided he or she had money to pay for land rentals, seed and the hire of harvesting equipment. While indenture was still underway, the farmers were not always bound by a contract to produce cane as was the case after 1920. Superimposed on these two production processes outside of plantation production was domestic labour; again, an unwaged labour process which gradually began to be kept in place and mediated by the marriage contract and the failure of the domestic labourers to have access to paid work. Since women were always the

unpaid and unfree domestic workers outside the plantation sector, they are viewed as exploited workers whose dependency on men for a living was reinforced by the fear of male violence which had already been expressed towards indentured women by indentured men.

Thus the articulation between the fact of 'femininity' and the various production processes in Fiji between 1879 and 1930 can be clarified as: the unfree and 'waged' plantation production process; the free and waged sugar production process; free and unwaged farm production process; unfree peasant production process for sale to capitalist markets; and unfree and unwaged domestic labour process.

Women were involved as producers in all contexts. On plantations they were unfree and unwaged in domestic labour but unfree and waged in indentured labour. On farms they were unwaged and unfree domestic labourers. After their indentures had been cancelled but within plantation production, they could be waged and free workers. The condition of freedom or unfreedom, or their status as waged or unwaged workers was closely tied to their fact of femininity. The condition of unfreedom or lack of payment of the male workers was not associated with their masculinity, but with their ability to produce goods for the market. As such their ability to care for their families or rear children did not impinge upon their status as paid workers, a condition that operated against women.

The femininity of women, although operating in specific ways on the industrial plantation and on farms in Fiji, was a historical construct which had its origins in conditions outside of the immediate Fijian context. Although the fact of 'femininity' of Indian women limited their involvement in paid work in Fiji, the behaviour and ideas associated with this fact can only be discussed with reference to the context in which it arose. Men's relations with women were influenced by ideas emanating from India and upon arrival in Fiji these had to be expressed differently, taking into account the institutionalised ideas about indigenous femininity which had already been encased in legislation by the colonial officials in charge of Fiji's affairs.

As unwaged and unfree domestic workers, Indian women in Fiji carried out two main productive activities. They cared for and maintained male

workers and they gave birth to and reared children. As waged and unfree workers, indentured women produced sugar cane for the mills which was then sold to the international markets. As unwaged and unfree married farm workers women reared and maintained children and men; they gave birth to children, and they produced subsistence goods for domestic consumption as well as helped with cane production when they were needed. Their ability to work for a wage outside the domestic arena was always mediated by their participation in household labour. In many cases this tension during indenture served to limit women's active involvement in paid work, leading the plantation authorities to see women as a 'reserve army of labour' and to eradicate their involvement in plantation production altogether.

As waged workers women produced a surplus for the capitalist firm, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company of Australia, which had quickly become the major employer in the Colony after the 1874 Cession to Great Britain. The product, sugar cane, was grown under industrial plantation conditions for milling and refining in Fiji and New Zealand, and then sold to the international markets. Indian women had been indentured in India in their own right as workers and as such they could demand paid work on the sugar plantations. However the payment per day that women received was defined by contract as 9 pence, and was three pence less than that awarded to men. Yet women were compelled, in most years of indenture, to work the same number of hours as men, and although their tasks were defined as three quarters of a man's task, the time in which this could be completed was always the same as that taken by men. Thus it would be accurate to say that Indian women were exploited as paid workers to a greater degree than men. The expectation that women could survive for less pay cheapened their labour power, forcing them to look for other means of livelihood in addition to paid plantation work. Their access to different types of work was limited by the unfree nature of the plantation production process so that women could survive only if they took certain types of plantation work such as prostitution or market gardening, or if they were able to be maintained by waged workers (men).

As unwaged and unfree workers in the domestic arena, women produced for men in return for their keep. They did housework and provided the

services men would normally have to pay for. Many single men paid women of the neighbourhood to do their housework and cook their food, but those who saw themselves as wives did all of this work for free, as well as providing sexual attention. Although many women undertook domestic service for love and affection, many others saw it as an exploitative labour process and left current husbands for other men.

The 'freedom' of women to seek other mates due to the lack of marriage contracts and because of their ability successfully to manipulate their scarcity value despite their general unfree condition as waged workers on the plantations, hindered the accumulation of wealth in the hands of indentured men. Men had to make marriage and fidelity attractive to women in a situation where the price of women was high and many lost money and resources in the process; an aspect about which they complained frequently to the Agent General of Immigration and to the courts. Since men could not necessarily keep women as wives forever through money alone, they took to killing or beating women who wished to leave. The fear of male violence kept many women in relationships from which they would have rather escaped. Recent feminist literature on violence against women shows that male brutality involves a sexual dimension which arises as a consequence of patriarchal ideas about the need to control women. Male violence is a complex phenomenon which has material connections with: 1) the ability of women to produce wealth for men in any mode of production, 2) with sexual politics which focuses on aggressive male sexuality and the will to dominate and, 3) with the notion of ownership of women which must be mediated by the fear of violence (see for example Hollway 1981; Walley 1986; Gunew: 1987 and Benjamin in Snitow et al 1984).

In Fiji the ability of indentured Indian men indiscriminately to kill women for sexual or emotional disengagement arose specifically from the patriarchal relations that were a feature of the Indian social circumstance from which the labourers came, and from plantation relations of production which specified personal relations between women and men as workers. The inability of the colonial state to deal with male violence against women stemmed from the colonial officials' own ideas about male supremacy. This resulted in their constructing state legislation immediately after Cession which defined and

protected the notion of property. Since women were seen as property in both the indigenous Fijian and the British contexts the law itself was biased against women.

Outside of the indentured labour process women could have the possibility of paid work. But as 'free' and waged labourers, women could only command a wage which was always three pence lower than that paid to men so that the encouragement provided to women to offer their labour power for sale after indenture was limited. Furthermore as small farms were gradually set up, the lease that was offered was increasingly meant for 'married' men, so that women were now necessary for men to get access to their own means of production. While women worked on the farm as workers, their labour was not paid and the cane payment received at the end of the harvesting was set aside either for paying farm debts or for re-investment on the farm. The food that was needed for the family was produced on the farm by women and processed by them. Thus their maintenance enabled the male farmers to extend the farm or consolidate their position as the lessees. Women were not recognised as co-owners and, unless they sold the produce of their gardens or of their household, they could have limited access to money. In actual fact women could get money but this was usually mediated and controlled by men.

On farms actual male violence against women may not have been necessary since the control of women was obtained through lack of opportunity for paid work, and their emotional and political dependence. Nevertheless the experience of indenture was never too far away, and although farm women may not have been killed by men, this was probably because women did not leave them for other men. The fear of actual violence was replaced by the anxiety about potential violence. When Indians settled on farms, the controls over female sexuality were achieved through contractual obligation and the ideology of marriage. This was mediated through kin networks that had become a feature of post 1920 farm production. It was also held in place by the increasing numbers of children being born to former indentured women. There was less chance of women leaving their husbands if they had children to look after.

Thus the articulation between the fact of 'femininity' in Fiji and accumulation of wealth involves an examination of two dimensions of 'production'. The analysis entails an examination of waged and unwaged work, and 'free' and unfree labour processes. Within this framework of productions the products were as follows: sugar cane, domestic work (including free or paid-for sex), and children. The unfreedom of women and the appropriation of their surplus were kept in place by violence, legislation and lack of opportunity. Although profits were made through women's labour this was controlled by men and only limited access allowed to women. It was the femininity of women which enabled profits to be made by all men in the Colony between 1879 and 1930.

Within this array of productive activities, women could express their autonomy only within limits. As part of plantation unfree and waged labour women could protest about their work conditions and their payment and go on strike, as many women did, often providing leadership also for the men. As unfree and unwaged domestic workers, women could refuse to do housework or to stay with only one man, thus exercising their rights over their own sexuality. They could also refuse to have children, thus limiting the number of future workers that the employers and men could call upon to further enhance their wealth. As unfree and unwaged farm workers, the women were unable to express their autonomy in any meaningful way. Most girls were married at a very young age and the marriage was seen as indissoluble for the lifetime. This prohibited the expression of any form of protest action except perhaps suicide. Although there are no figures for female suicides on small farms, recent work by Ruth Haynes has shown that suicides among women in some farm districts are increasing (1984). Most Indian women were unable to escape the confines of marriage and the family because there was nowhere for them to go. This may well be a problem for women generally.

Cutting across the different types of productive activity of women on plantations and small farms in Fiji between 1879 and 1930 was the attribute of colour. In this thesis I view the colour attribute as a 'relation of production' (Miles op cit pp186-195) because colour was significant for the allocation of workers in the production hierarchy. The colour dimension had been significant in India too, where colonial

officials dealt with Indians in terms of whether or not they were of Aryan background. It is also used with reference to women because it was colour that led to the sexual exploitation of indentured Indian women by white men. Indian women were seen to be sexual objects whose colour made them attractive as 'exotic' beings to the white authorities. As a relation of production, colour enabled the white men to pay all workers less than the wage commanded by white workers, and to exploit women workers' sexuality as well.

The development of a methodology adequately to analyse the articulation between the fact of 'femininity' and wealth accumulation in Fiji between 1879 and 1930 is based on the following ideas: first of all the interplay between unfree/free and waged/unwaged labour as far as women were concerned was derived from the value placed on their feminine attributes within colonial/capitalist-firm contexts. Indian women's situation as unfree and/or free workers cannot be seen separately from their gender. Secondly, men were aware that women's work comprised their ability to have children and provide nurturance as well as their ability to produce goods for a foreign market. Their exploitation encompassed all their productive activities- as paid workers, as domestics and as sexual beings. Thirdly, the work participation of women could be enforced through legislation, violence and contractual obligation- all extra-economic aspects of control which mediated relationships between women and men to the advantage of men. Fourthly, the ability of men to control women's sexuality through extra-economic as well as economic means deprived women of basic rights and a reasonable standard of living. The failure of women to gain any form of public platform by 1930 attests to the extent of control over their productive capacities. This absolute control of women by men involved the ability of men to exchange women for goods, services and money. Thus women were used as objects of trade.

Finally, despite these obvious constraints, women were not passive victims forever doomed to enslavement. Within the general context of exploitation and oppression women managed to attain some rewards for themselves. During indenture they refused to provide services for free, even to the extent of agreeing to sell their female children to men. Cases of infanticide were also reported. They also fought for pay

and improvement of work conditions. In 1920 Indian women organised a massive labour strike which had to be quelled by Fijian, Australian and New Zealand military intervention. But between 1920 and 1930 women gradually became absorbed in farm production which limited their autonomy because of their isolation from other women, the lack of independent wealth, and a political platform. At the end of the decade they were denied enfranchisement.

This thesis is organised as follows: In Chapter 2 I situate the exploitation of women's productive capacities in the Indian and Fijian socio-economic and political context. I argue that the accumulation of wealth in the hands of men as a consequence of women's labour arose from the caste/class/colour basis of traditional Indian social formations and the class/kinship collectivities of the Fijians, and was exacerbated by white colonial/capitalist infiltration of India and Fiji. This material exploitation was accompanied by ideological and contractual constructs which were held in place by practices such as widow murder and other forms of male control such as early marriage of girls and abduction of women. This was the patriarchal cultural and economic baggage with which Indians arrived in Fiji and which they faced upon their arrival. Thus similar practices (customs) of male dominance were institutionalised within the Indian and Fijian pre-capitalist and pre-colonial context. Upon colonisation of India and Fiji, the rules about women's subordination were made into law by white officials. Eventually, the laws of the colony of Fiji, which affected both Fijians and Indians alike, defined the clear boundaries within which all women could exercise their productive autonomy.

In Chapter 3 I argue that the formal colonisation of Fiji in 1874 and capitalist infiltration can only be comprehended through the 'free' and 'unfree' labour distinction made in the modes of production debates. I stress that in order to map out the precise forms of exploitation of women's labour in or outside of plantations a clear idea about the marxist notion of the capitalist mode of production has to be worked out. It is held that the Fijian social formation at this time (between 1879 to 1930) was not characterised by capitalist dominance because of the scarcity of 'free' and waged labour. On the contrary Fiji was undergoing a transitional phase which had particular

implications for women's production for capital accumulation, also referred to by the marxist term of 'primitive accumulation'.

This point is elaborated when I argue that in the definitions of 'unfree' labour, women's production in the domestic arena is rarely analysed by male theorists. In the case of Fiji women's labour was indispensable in the initial stage of capital accumulation because parts of it were not only unfree but unwaged. As such, a tremendous amount of profit was made from exploiting their work capacities. This point is supported by evidence from recent work done by women and men on slave, contract and indentured labour internationally. This chapter includes a reference to the limitations placed on women as a consequence of the colour attribute.

In Chapter 4 I examine the condition of all Indian indentured women in the British colonies. Using the recent work of third world writers I argue that on plantations Indian women were exploited as a reserve army of labour because the exploitation of their femininity limited their participation in paid work. It is held that their exploitation as a reserve army in paid work was kept in place by the structure of the industrial plantation, by rules defining gender activities and by white male violence. This chapter is used to illustrate the idea that the modes of production thesis cannot adequately reveal the mechanisms of labour exploitation unless women are recognised as bonded and unwaged productive workers.

In Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 I present my case study of Indian women workers in Fiji between 1879 and 1930. In Chapter 5 I describe and analyse the work situation of women in the Fiji indentured labour force, arguing that because there was limited 'commodification' of labour power during the period of indenture, the indentured labour process cannot be defined as 'capitalist'. On the contrary, indenture was a transitional productive process- it was organised on the basis of 'unfreedom' although the women workers were paid a nominal sum. I concentrate specifically on the exploitation of indentured women workers here and illustrate the ways in which their labour power was exploited by white men who were able to make sugarcane the main industrial activity through the manipulation of the

unfree/waged/colour-based productive relations. Further to this, in Chapter 6 I argue that women's work in the home under conditions of unfreedom and non-payment must also be seen as non-commodification of labour power, which indicates non-capitalist production. This shows that unless women's labour is commodified capitalist dominance is not indicated. The domestication of women in Fiji includes the control of their biology, their ability to maintain people through housework, and their sexuality.

In Chapters 7/8 I map out the resistance of Indian women to their exploitation and oppression in Fiji. I argue that women responded to the different forms of exploitation of their labour by the use of different strategies. As waged workers they protested against their work conditions, as unwaged workers they challenged male dominance, and as the producers of the next generation of workers they refused to be 'good' mothers. Women's resistance placed limits on the ability of capitalists and men to exploit women's productive capacities to the fullest extent, and in Chapter 9 using both historical and contemporary examples of women's work on cane farms, I illustrate the ways in which the domestication of women after indenture served not only to contain women's protest but also to extract their labour through extra-economic coercion and economic and political disadvantage. I conclude by postulating that in any discussion of wealth accumulation, the femininity of women cannot be by-passed or ignored as irrelevant. Productive activity, which leads to accumulation of wealth has to be analysed in terms of all its forms—paid, unpaid, 'free' or bonded. Women have always been at the centre of all forms of productive activity, no less so in Fiji where their 'femininity' was crucial in the development and maintenance of the wealth of the colony.

In a thesis of this nature, where multi-views are utilised for the formulation of a satisfactory framework for the analysis of Indian women in productive activity in Fiji, the research material referred to comes from a variety of sources. First of all the written sources on Fiji were referred to for an idea of different viewpoints on women and work. Due to the silence about women in most secondary material, reference was made to primary sources. These were: the Colonial

Government records housed in the National Archives of Fiji and the libraries of Universities of Auckland, Waikato, Canterbury, Victoria and Massey in New Zealand, and the Mitchell and Australian National University libraries in Sydney and Canberra. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company sources at the Archives of Business and Labour in Canberra and the Head Office in Sydney were also consulted. But even the primary material, although illuminating in terms of the structural position and allocation of workers on plantations and farms, could not provide me with any idea of the feelings and opinions of the workers themselves. For this purpose oral sources were used.

There are two main types of oral records that have informed this study: first, those that had already been documented by scholars of Indian history in Fiji, and secondly those that have not yet been written down, except in this thesis. The 1979 Girit Centenary celebrations were particularly useful as a source because many actual accounts of the survivors of indenture had been documented by local scholars. Where this was unsatisfactory (e.g. I found that mostly men's stories had been recorded), I conducted my own interviews. I interviewed women 'giritiyas' as well as the female children of indentured workers in an attempt to piece together the shifting ideas about women's productive activity and the ideologies and stereotypes that accompanied this process. My own interviews, conducted over a period of about four years, illustrated that Indian women had their own firm ideas about gender, colour and class and that their exploitation was resented by them.

Finally, I have used my own experiences as an Indo-Fijian woman growing up in the sixties and seventies in Fiji as a personal perspective. As a first/second-generation Indo-Fijian woman of Islamic heritage and feminist affiliation, my personal experiences of exploitation and oppression took into account gender, class and colour. As the eldest daughter of an intellectual but religious Pakistani father and a mission-educated first generation-Indo-Fijian mother, whose own upbringing was defined by the male Indian politics of reconstruction of the 1920s, my childhood politics incorporated a strong tension between appropriate female behavior and the desire of my parents to make their mark upon the world through their children,

all of whom were female. My parents attempted to provide me with an experience of both worlds- the world of the Islamic female and the world of liberal (not always western) education. The resulting tension in all our lives ended with a separating of paths, forcing me to confront in very personal terms the different methods by which women were expected to conform and the punishment meted out to those who did not. This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my great grandmother and to those of her contemporaries who dared to challenge male authority and to have fun, despite its high price.

CHAPTER 2 PATRIARCHY, CLASS AND WEALTH ACCUMULATION- INDIA AND FIJI.

Although the subject of this enquiry is the connection between wealth accumulation and the femininity of Indian women in Fiji, 1879-1930, it will have become evident from the focus in my introductory chapter that the concept of 'femininity' can be described both in terms of historical specificity, and more generally as the opposite of masculinity. Indian women's femininity enabled wealth to be accumulated in Fiji between 1879 and 1920 but some of the conditions that brought this about had their roots in another social context- India. Furthermore, the location of Indian women within the new context was invariably affected by ideas about femininity indigenous to Fiji and by the ideas introduced and reinforced by the white colonial officials whose own experience of femininity was located in the European patriarchal tradition.

In this chapter I examine the fact of 'femininity' of Indian and native Fijian women in pre-capitalist social contexts. I show that accumulation of wealth from the labour that was carried out as a consequence of the 'femininity' of women was well underway prior to capitalist and colonial infiltration of India and Fiji, and that this was achieved through the institutions of class/caste and patriarchy. I argue that when Indian women arrived in Fiji the exploitation of their labour as women was already underway and was enforced by various means of control, and by labour processes located outside capitalist production. I show that aspects of kinship and the contractual obligation of 'marriage' negatively affected women and forced out of them surplus labour, i.e. that over and above what they needed for their own maintenance and reproduction.

I also argue that in both India and Fiji the exploitation of women's labour in production was achieved through physical and psychological male violence which defined for women the boundaries within which they might exercise autonomy. I show that indigenous practices such as 'suttee' and widow murder were premised upon the understanding that women were the property of men and that their very persons were perceived as labouring objects creating wealth. As such, women were

traded between men as potential labouring beings which included a recognition of their specific usefulness in regenerating the next generation of workers or alternatively, rulers. The exchanges that took place upon marriage took into account women's special utility as labourers. This led to the accumulation of wealth on the part of the kin-based tribal or clan collectivities.

Also in this chapter, I examine the new dimensions of sexism, colour prejudice, and class alliance that began to appear after contact with Europeans who were making inroads into both India and Fiji as part of a general colonial/capitalist drive for wealth outside of Europe. I argue that upon contact with white people, Indian and Fijian social formations entered new periods of transition which either extended and reinforced the pre-capitalist/colonial patriarchal and class hegemony, or alternatively introduced new ones. This process of transition was significant for 'femininity' in different ways: first, the new industries and production processes introduced into the indigenous communities after contact made it possible for women to gain an entry into labour processes hitherto outside the domestic domain thus giving them a greater option to exercise their autonomy, but on the other hand, this process introduced a variety of ways of furthering women's exploitation by fostering the formation of a category of work called 'housework' or domestic work which compelled women to work for men for long hours and no pay. When the governing officials eventually formulated a set of formal rules for the colonies these processes of exploitation of women were encased in legislation. Furthermore, when colonial policies allowed for widespread exploitation of all labouring people for the purposes of wealth accumulation and transfer to the metropolis, the exploitation of women's labour was taken into consideration. This will be articulated explicitly with reference to both Indian and Fijian women in this chapter. The patriarchal and caste/class structures affecting Indian and Fijian women in their indigenous social contexts are dealt with separately in this chapter to indicate historical specificity of exploitation of 'femininity'. However it must be pointed out that although the individual styles of exploitation of women were unique, in the final analysis, the basis on which wealth appropriation rested was fundamentally the same. Indian and Fijian women both had to deal with class and gender inequalities

within their unique social settings. It is this similarity of exploitation and oppression that is dealt with here. Later, when the colonial officials encrusted certain practices in law, this inequality was reproduced without question, furthering women's subordination to men. When Indian women first arrived in Fiji they were bound not only by their own codes of class and patriarchy, but also by those they found within the Fijian socio-economic and political context.

1. Precapitalist Modes of Production in India and Women

Prior to European colonisation, India had a sophisticated social formation that had arisen as a consequence of a complex division of labour. This has commonly been referred to as 'caste' or 'caste/class' but Indian feminists are now reconceptualising the traditional labour divisions in terms of caste/class, gender and ethnicity. To understand the position of women in a social formation as complex as India it is necessary to see the degree and nature of their subordination as varying from caste to class to ethnic group (Omvedt: 1975 p 43). (1) The subordination of women is related to the general hierarchical organisation of caste society in the same way that it is related to cultural hierarchies of any agrarian social structure (ibid p 46 and 48 notes).

India has one of the oldest civilisations of the world. Archeological and anthropological evidence reveals that India's city-based civilisation was flourishing contemporaneously with Mesopotamia, and goes as far back as 2500 B.C., although there may have been inhabitants in India even before that. The Indus civilisation extended over a vast area from the Himalayas to the Arabian Sea and the two great cities known from this period were Mohenjo-daro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab (Moreland and Chatterjee: 1936; Opert: 1972; Lebra et al : 1984). The cities were beautiful in structure and well-planned, with widespread use of kiln-fired bricks. There were elaborate and elegant brick drainage systems and granary storehouses where grains, giving the large part of the cities' income, were stored. The standard of writing, art and literature was sophisticated and it appears from the evidence that people lived in luxury and comfort. There was some form of religion or spirituality, indicated by the figurines found at excavation sites. Although the male deity

(Shiva or Siva) was important, it was the Mother Goddess who commanded the loyalty of most people. Lebra et al point out that it is possible that matriliney existed at the time, the vestiges of which are still exhibited among the Nairs of present-day Kerala where divorce procedures are simple and sometimes polyandry is found. Polyandry also flourished in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) until the Europeans outlawed it in the early 17th century (Lebra et al ibid p 5).

About 1500 B.C. the Indus Valley civilisation was overtaken by the Aryans who appear to have come in stages to India. The early Aryans were considered to be barbarians by the Indus valley people. The Aryans did not live in towns and their homes were built of wood rather than bricks or tiles. Our knowledge of Aryans is derived mainly from the Rigveda, the oldest Sanskrit text or hymn book in which religion and ritual are described in detail. It is unclear from the archeological evidence exactly where the Aryans came from originally but they seemed to have been a collection of tribes from various parts of Europe and Asia. They travelled to India over many centuries and are thought of as immigrants rather than invading armies because they moved with their families and their stock. As they travelled they settled in the Indus Valley, dispossessing the people they found, largely through violence and warfare. There are many accounts of battles between the Aryans and the dark-skinned 'Daryas' they found in the Valley (Moreland and Chatterjee op cit p 12).

The most significant social relations the Aryans introduced to Indus valley were patriarchal social relations. An Aryan tribe was composed of monogamous families in which the father occupied a prominent patriarchal position and the mother an 'honourable' subordinate one (ibid). Each family lived apart and villages arose as a consequence of a gathering of families. The tribe was ruled by a king whose position was usually hereditary and who listened to the advice of a council. The Aryans also had slaves consisting of prisoners of war. The slaves did most of the work. Property was reckoned in cows which served as a unit of value, although it appears that cattle were also valued for meat. Horses were prized for war but sheep, goats, donkeys and dogs were domesticated. In terms of clothing, woollen cloth and skins were worn but weaving was women's work and thus is rarely mentioned in the

surviving literature. The vedic Aryans introduced the principle of analoma, or marriage upward. This was probably to prevent women from marrying the indigenous inhabitants who had been conquered.

Since the early Aryans emphasised the building up of numerical strength within the family and clan (the basis of their economic unit), widow remarriage was initially allowed for the purposes of procreation. But the Aryan desire for superiority over the pre-Aryans gradually led to restrictions. Eventually beliefs were introduced that were associated with distinctions between people on the basis of caste. Caste-based divisions of labour were accompanied by ideas regarding 'purity' and 'pollution'. Aryan women were eventually prohibited from marrying even below their sub-caste and there was great emphasis on chastity and wifely fidelity. Divorce and remarriage of women came to be seen as evil. Wifely fidelity and prohibition on divorce was ensured by the marriage of girls before the age of puberty. By this method the legitimacy of heirs was also assured. The practice of child betrothal and suttee (sati) or widow burning were further consequences of the emphasis on chastity and sexual fidelity.

It seems from the evidence that at the time Aryans began to impose caste restrictions on those they considered to be below them in status, they also reinforced a particular set of ideas regarding the inferiority of women. The Aryan civilisation in the Indus Valley had exhibited a marked unequal sexual division of labour which could have been imposed upon the pre-Aryan people but it is unclear as to what extent the original inhabitants' own divisions of labour also incorporated an unequal sexual dimension. Along with the structured Aryan caste-based division of labour there also emerged a social situation wherein women's work and their status relative to men was inferior regardless of their location in the overall caste relation. Under such circumstances women were very readily converted to property, and exchanged for domesticated animals and other merchandise.

Over the centuries the Aryans perfected their systems of domination, imposing them upon all the people they conquered in India.

Contemporary feminist literature from India tells us that the legacy of Aryans pervaded all aspects of life whatever the individual background of the people living there. Even non-Hindus were influenced by the Hindu concepts of purity and pollution. The social custom of dowry also began to pervade all communities (Lebra et al p 16; Leonard op cit; Omvedt op cit; Stein 1978 and Mukherjee: 1983).

In 712 A.D. the Muslims began to conquer Northern India. The Muslims brought with them different sets of customs and values but there was one important similarity between Aryans and Muslims: they were both male dominated and their concept of property included the perception of women as property. Regardless of the strictures of Islam forbidding cruelty to women and the promise of equal rights in divorce, remarriage and property settlements, the Muslim invaders treated the women as units of labour and as objects with which they could barter. Brideprice, dowry and purdah had been a part of the Muslim empire for centuries even though many local patriarchal practices had been adopted by Islamic rulers as they conquered territories in Europe and Asia (Hyder in Jain (ed) 1975). Although Islamic women had gone to war as nurses, soldiers and even commanders during the Crusades, this had not uplifted their status or made them less responsible for the nurturance of children or the caring of men. Under various Islamic leaders in Arabia women's status had improved or deteriorated according to the sentiments of each (male) individual ruler. Under Omayyad Caliph Wahid II (8 A.D.) for example, the Arab ruling class permitted courtesans and dance girls to ply their trade, and it was this that forced 'respectable' Muslim men to segregate their women fearing that they could be mistaken for professional entertainers (Hyder ibid p 199). But other rules limiting the personal autonomy of women could have arisen as a consequence of the establishment of Mecca as a trading city, as well as external socio-cultural influences, and internal economic and social change based upon the accumulation of other forms of property (Ahmed 1986).

The attitude towards women on the part of Muslim men was accommodated perfectly by Hindu men. Upper caste Hindus found in the practice of purdah the ideal mechanism for the seclusion of their women and the 'protection' of them from the invaders. As sexual and other

hierarchical forms of division of labour intensified in India, the seclusion of women began to be confined to women of the upper classes. These classes could afford to remove their women from public activity because a subordinate group were now doing the work for an unproductive set of people. Seclusion was out of the question for lower caste/class peasant women whose families' labour was crucial for the maintenance of the upper caste/classes.

Within this framework, concerns with caste purity relegated women not only to the realm of the 'impure' due to their involvement with the process of childbirth but also required that their sexuality be controlled. Upper caste women were married before puberty and passed from the control of their fathers to that of their husbands, and finally to that of their sons. Lower caste women did retain a degree of social freedom and independence but they were in an inferior position, partly as a consequence of their poor socio-economic position which compelled them to slave for the upper castes for survival, and partly because indigenous patriarchal institutions enforced their exploitation as part of patriarchal kin-based networks. Moreover some aspects of upper caste restrictions and confinement of women were embraced by the lower castes through the process of 'Sanskritization'. This is revealed by an examination of the historical material on suttee. This aspect will be examined presently, but prior to that there is a need to outline the image of women in Hindu discourse which served as the ideology justifying the material subordination of women, and reinforcing such practices as suttee.

(i) The image of women in Hinduism

The image of women in Hindu India stems from the idea that women were so virtuous that they outnumbered men in Heaven and therefore God spread vices among them so that Heaven could be secured for men alone (Mukherjee: 1983 p 375). In the great Hindu epics and hymn books the following attributes were considered to be the best virtues of women: fidelity, forgiveness, absence of guile, piety and truthfulness. A chaste wife was praised by all and on her depended the three objectives of Hindu life- religion, wealth and pleasure. Women who contradicted their husbands and acted rashly were disliked and the six causes of women's ruin were listed as drinking alcohol, keeping

company with bad people, separation from husbands, roaming abroad, sleeping in the daytime and living in another's house (Mahabharata Anusasanaparvan 11; Manusmṛti IX 13, 84 cited in Mukherjee *ibid* p 375). Disobedience to husbands was considered to be such a serious matter that it was suggested that a woman who committed this sin should be devoured by a dog (Manusmṛti VIII, 371 cited in Mukherjee *ibid*).

Hindu religion and culture uses the example of three ideal women upon which all earth-bound women must model themselves: Draupadi, Sita and Parvati, although others such as Damayanti and Kunti were also extolled for their virtues. Draupadi had a polyandrous marriage and her experiences were supposed to help women look after their husbands. Draupadi washed her husbands' feet, looked after their comforts, and ate only after they had finished. When her husbands went away she gave up using cosmetics or decorating herself with ornaments or flowers. At home she was the first to get up and the last to retire and her housewifely duties included household management of other co-wives as well as servants. By taking responsibility for household tasks Draupadi freed her husbands for religious pursuits. But Draupadi's one downfall was that she preferred one of her husbands over the others. Because of this preference she failed in her bid to reach heaven alive. Draupadi was not free from patriarchy despite her ability to marry more than one man.

In Hindu tradition Sita is eternally remembered as pious, pure, self-sacrificing, self-effacing and an ideal woman. The most significant trait in her character was her infinite capacity to bear suffering. As queen of Rama she abandoned palace life to accompany him to the forest when he was exiled. She was abducted by Ravana the demon king and was eventually rescued by her husband who refused to believe that she had not been ravished in the process. He was thereafter always suspicious of her claims to chastity until, unable to bear her misfortune further, Sita took refuge in mother earth. Till the end she remained loyal, faithful and humble.

Parvati, known as Sati in her previous life was the wife of the god Siva. As Parvati she was again destined to become the wife of Siva who

initially ignored her because he was engaged in meditation. Parvati also took up meditation and gradually lost her physical beauty. Ultimately her unswerving devotion won her husband back to her.

For Indian women the message was always clear. They had to remain loyal, humble and devoted to their husbands even though they were treated badly by them. Only this could be rewarded in the afterlife. The purpose of the stories was to demonstrate that the only goal in a woman's life was to be an ideal wife. In the early twentieth century when Gandhi was urging that women should take their place in actions of protest against British colonisation, the images that he called upon as a guideline for women were those of Sita, Draupadi and Parvati. As Mukerjee points out, what was being upheld was ideal wifehood, not ideal womanhood (ibid p 380). A woman was not properly a woman unless she was also a wife. The marriage tie was eternal and once married the women remained permanently the wife of the same man. Widow remarriage was not permitted and socially and ritually a woman had to be subservient to her husband.

This 'ideal' prescription of wifehood had not always been in evidence in India. There are reports suggesting that remarriage of women had not always been outlawed and that children conceived outside of wedlock had been acceptable. But in the newly constituted social situation, the Brahmins were at the top of the hierarchy. They took the lead in the dissemination of knowledge and their position as conquerors permitted them to impose their systems of stratification upon the conquered. From about 800 B.C. 'brahminical theodicy' characterised the society and the customs of the people (ibid). This found expression in the patriarchal family, the importance of lineage and after-death ceremonies, the theory of transmigration of souls and the doctrine of karma, i.e. deeds following retribution at the social and spiritual level (ibid). Further, personal ownership of property at the economic level needed this theodicy to sustain it. Concentration and inheritance of property required an heir and since women were deprived of inheritance from the fourth century B.C. (Arthashastra III, 5, cited in Mukherjee ibid), and also religious rights, a male descendent became important. A 'natural' son was preferred because his birth alone delivered his father from a certain kind of hell

(Manusmṛti IX, 138, *ibid*). Thus sons, or rather, 'natural' sons became essential to all, rich and poor alike (*ibid*). Since the establishment of the male lineage was imperative, marriage became obligatory for women and the determination of paternity of children was vital, fostering pre-puberty marriage, the virginity of girls, the purdah of women and the indissolubility of marriage. Under these circumstances and under the general abundance rather than scarcity of women it was inevitable that physical destruction of women would become a necessity for the maintenance and reproduction of such cultural practices.

The following discussion of the practice of 'suttee' reveals two important points: 1) the extent of the recognition of women as property to the point where their physical destruction can be at the whim of a patriarchal society and, 2) the extent to which the practices of certain dominant groups can be embraced by subordinate groups under particular conditions of material deprivation. This indicates that subordination can sometimes be reproduced by the powerless.

(ii) Suttee

The practice of burning women alive was associated with the highest honourable act, equated with the heroism of warriors. Suttee was originally associated with the Ksatriya (ruler) caste which endowed the practice with social prestige reproduced even in contemporary times. (2) While the Brahmins were supposed to have originally forbidden the practice of suttee they soon gave way to social pressure. They must have also been presented with some benefits derived from this practice. It was so much associated with the idea of honour that no self-respecting ruling class could afford to ignore it (Stein *op cit*).

The most usual form of suttee was that of burning the wife alive on the funeral pyre of her husband. On the way to the pyre the widow was the subject of everyone's attention and she distributed money or jewellery to the crowd, thus collaborating in her own destruction. Sometimes the widow herself, or her son would light the flame underneath the pyre, a process that was accompanied by much chanting and religious incantation.

It could be suggested that Indian women might have preferred death to widowhood. Widows were supposed to lead austere lives, with one very plain meal a day. They were expected to carry out the most menial tasks for the in-laws, never sleep in a bed, wear the plainest clothes, leave the house only to go to worship, and, for highborn women, to have their heads shaved by an untouchable male barber (ibid p 255). All this was necessary in order to safeguard their husbands' souls and to prevent the women's own rebirth as female animals. While the widow could in theory refuse to perform suttee this was rarely done in practice because of the social prestige attached to the act. But there were also measures taken by the family of the dead man, such as the construction of the scaffolding itself which tilted toward the pyre, the blocking of escape routes and, failing that, the actual dragging of the widow to the fire, sometimes by her own sons (ibid), to ensure that the widow performed suttee.

The principle behind suttee had to do with women's sexuality. Women were seen to be uncontrolled sexual beings whose potential rampant sexuality after their husbands' deaths could cause the downfall of the family. Only by ritual killing could the husbands' families be assured of 35 million years of paradise (ibid p 256), regardless of their other sins. In other words, the men's bad behaviour would be forgiven by the burning of their widows on the funeral pyre.

But the suttee was not only an ideological mechanism for the control of female sexuality. The economic benefits of suttee also played a part in the reproduction of this practice. Once a Hindu girl married she was officially given over to the care of her husbands' family. Her own family no longer had any moral or economic responsibility toward her present or future maintenance or well-being. Hindi songs sung at weddings in contemporary times attest to this transferring of ownership on the part of the bride's father. Once widowed the woman was of no further use to her in-laws as the bearer of sons which was of crucial significance in the inheritance of property. Should she become pregnant as a widow the family honour would be tainted and in addition, the legitimacy of the previous children would also be in question. Her death at least assured legitimacy of heirs and security

of the lineage and it also eliminated her from claiming a share of her husband's estate which would include her own dowry. The practice of suttee was also lucrative for those who administered the proceedings, i.e. the priests. They were the recipients of the wealth of those involved. The suttee's gold ornaments and jewellery were given to the priests and his helpers. Priestly expenses rose in response to the wealth of the family.

But suttee was not only confined to those families of high rank who had an interest in protecting their wealth. By the 19th century lower castes were also liberally burning their widows, and some castes had to be refused permission to perform suttee on grounds of their low status (Culcutta Review cited in Stein *ibid*). By the end of the 19th century most suttees were taking place in Bengal, the area from which most Indians left for Fiji and other British colonies. Between 1824 and 1828 2,137 women died in this way (*ibid*).

While such mortality figures may not seem overly large by Indian standards (many more women died in famines, floods and as a result of disease), it is the way these women died that is significant. The actual practice of suttee was horrific but more significant were the pervasive attitudes behind the killings. Widowhood was treated with disdain and in most cases active cruelty was practised against women whose husbands died. Even if suttee was not performed by many women upon the deaths of their husbands, their situation for the rest of their lives was miserable. For many suttee may well have been the easy way out. This indicates that there was no choice for women. They could be poverty-stricken widows who were virtually gaoled in fortresses away from public view, or they were killed in public amid much fanfare and publicity.

In pre-capitalist India therefore the women were already a subordinate and ill-treated group whose very existence was dependent upon the whims of a patriarchal social formation. Violence against women was institutionalised to such an extent that women themselves collaborated in their own destruction. Although widow burnings occurred only in a relatively small number of cases, the ideas behind female destruction or confinement pervaded social life. The burning of women was only the

extreme end of the spectrum of violation of Indian women. As females, women's rampant sexuality and their ability to produce offspring after the deaths of their husbands served as a constant danger to patriarchal hegemony. This sentiment affected all Indians, even those who made the choice to leave this environment and seek another life as migrants overseas.

Violence against women and the negative imagery of femininity in India must be placed within the framework of Indian relations of production. Since the negative view of women in popular and religious literature focussed on 'wifehood' and 'motherhood', the labour processes associated with these labels can be examined to show the connection between 'image' and material reality. It will be recalled that the Indian social formation had as its linchpin the caste relation. Despite its spiritual aspect caste can be understood in terms of the notion of division of labour. For Indian women, both the caste-based division of labour (occupational specialisation), and the gender-based division of labour were significant for their treatment in imagery and in actual experience. This is examined next with reference to different views of the modes of production in India prior to European contact.

(iii). Pre-capitalist relations of production in India

European travellers to the Orient in the 17th century recorded the great contrast between the dazzling wealth of the courts and the severe deprivation of most of the people (Levitt: 1978 p 39). The ideas about India expressed in the travel journals of the adventurers were taken up by the liberal thinkers of Europe in the 18th century. Some of these thinkers were full of praise for the Indian modes of doing things, arguing that the notion of property that had developed not only in India but in China also exhibited a sophisticated advancement which had already separated the public from the private (see for example the work of the Physiocrats, Voltaire and Tindal cited in Levitt ibid p 40). Adam Smith explored the social relations of Asia, arguing that there was a separation between town and country and, judging by the development of technology, science and industry in both Europe and Asia, there was little difference between the two. Smith also referred to the relation between political sovereignty and

land ownership: the surplus value which the immediate producers in the village communities gave up to the State was in the form of a tax/rent. Political sovereignty and land ownership coincided (ibid p 41).

In the early nineteenth century some theories of a particular mode of production specific to conditions in Asia was advanced by Hegel, Richard Jones and by various colonial administrators. Hegel maintained that there was an important distinction between ownership and possession in the question of Asian land tenure and he also developed distinctions between state and civil society, the private and the public, and voluntary and involuntary sides of social life (ibid). Hegel characterised the Indian social formation as lacking in the notion of 'self', and hence moral consciousness. Thus there was no 'history' in India because the political condition had hardly developed. The caste system stood in opposition to the centralised state. He contrasted this with China where the understanding of 'self' was evident. Hegel argued that societies in Asia and those in Europe were different. In India the immediate producers were bound and in an unfree condition but the bonds of the group were comforting and supportive (ibid p 42). Nevertheless the villagers (producers) were separated both socially and spatially from the rulers and dynastic changes did not appear to have drastic effects on them.

Following from Adam Smith, Richard Jones argued that the public and the private worlds were not yet separate in the Orient, pointing out that political sovereignty was in the hands of the private proprietor of the land, and that the rent paid to the landlord as an individual and tax paid to the State were one and the same (ibid). Jones developed four categories of rent which later served as the basis for Marx's own ideas about the notion of rent: rent in labour; rent in kind; rent-tax and cottier tax. Marx subsumed rent-tax under rent in labour and rent in kind because rent-tax was not determined by the relation between the immediate producers and the landlord but by the 'character of the rent collector' (Kraider: 1975: p 157 cited in Levitt ibid p46). But this was possibly a mistake for the form of rent, e.g. labour, kind, money etc was qualitatively different from rent as tax,

the former related to the form of social labour, while the latter derived from the nature of the agency of the State (ibid p 43).

In terms of basic features the Asiatic Mode of production was identified as a mode of production founded upon the working of the soil where the immediate producers were dwellers in village communities within which they were bound. There were two great classes- the agricultural labourers (immediate producers) and the rulers (who lived on the surplus produced by and taken from the immediate producers). Within the Asiatic Mode of Production the villages were initially virtually self-contained with little exchange of products so there was little contact with outsiders. However there was a communal division of labour which was based upon collective production. It has been recently argued that the division of social labour, i.e. labour divided within society was only weakly present (ibid p 46). Further, production proceeded on the impulse provided by the wants of the immediate producers themselves. Production for exchange played a minor role. There was little circulation of money, and gold was buried or used for ornamentation and religious ceremony. There was no separation of agriculture and manufacturing, each being carried out within the village by immediate producers. There was also no separation of town and country at this point. The surplus was produced in the village but the surplus labour of each village was a small quantity because necessary labour took up most time. The surplus moved in two directions: in the development of exchange between villages (thus being exchanged as commodities), and to the sovereignty in the form of a tax-rent which was collected by the agents of the State. This first form of rent-tax was surplus labour itself (in military service, labour on irrigation projects and on construction sites of religious monuments). Thus value was produced and exchange value separated from value-in-use, and surplus generated (ibid). Products thus became commodities which circulated in exchange. Once the increase in inter-village contact occurred there was regulation of commodity exchange. Thus within the Asiatic Mode of Production there emerged the increasing division of social labour, increasing commodity production, the separation of manufacture and agriculture, and the development of town and country. Capital appeared in the form of grain and money, with the grain and money-lender firstly acting as a

mediator between the producer and non-producer and later as an appropriator of surplus himself. Eventually private property grew in importance as the State grew in power and scope (ibid p 47). The Asiatic Mode of Production is thus seen by theorists as the first form of divided society, i.e. with antagonistic social classes and the appearance of the State and with the production of value of capital.

It has been argued that the Asiatic Mode of Production had a weakly developed division of social labour (ibid). Marx defined the social division of labour as the 'totality of heterogenous forms of useful labour which differ in order, genus, species and variety' (Capital 1 Chapter 1 cited in Bottomore 1983 p 131-134). Such a division of labour is necessary for commodity production although the converse is not- i.e. commodity production is not necessary for a social division of labour to occur. Thus, in terms of division of labour generally, there are two quite different divisions of labour to note: social division of labour (understood as a complex system of all the different useful forms of labour which are carried out independently of one another by private producers, a division of labour in exchange); and the division of labour between workers, each of whom undertakes a partial operation simultaneously with others. We are concerned here mainly with social division of labour, although it is inevitable that division of labour between workers will also be noted, especially when referring to the gender division of labour.

Social division of labour exists in all types of societies and originates in differences in human physiology which may be used to further particular ends. Since different communities have access to different means of production and to different resources this prompts specialisation and mutual exchange between 'social units' e.g. the family, tribe, etc. This provides an impetus for society-wide specialisation of production and hence a division of labour within the production process as well. In capitalism it is the compulsion to accumulate which structures the capitalist division of labour, and not the limits imposed by the extent of the market.

The two divisions are quite different in scope and emphasis. The division of labour in society requires a distribution of the means of

production among a large number of independent producers but division of labour within production requires concentration in the hands of the capitalist. Moreover, social division of labour is enforced by the process of competition. According to Marx, class relations are critical for determining the cleavage between particular and common interests (Marx: German Ideology cited in Bottomore op cit p 133).

Social division of labour was reputed to be only weakly developed in social formations exhibiting the Asiatic Mode of production. How then did commodity production occur? It occurred through the production of surplus which was eventually exchanged as commodities. The village was self-contained but within the village, a division of 'communal' labour based on the characteristics of collective production was in evidence. The question that must now be posed is: just how 'communal' was this village production, and further, on what basis was the division of labour initially organised?

In India, within the village, apart from caste-based occupational specialisation, there was also specialisation according to sex and age. This is exhibited even among the communities that practice polyandry. Majumdar's research shows that among the patrilineal kin-group the Jaunsari, the head of the family is the senior male member who is usually also the eldest among the senior male members in the family. Known as the Sayana he commands patriarchal authority and represents the notion of 'family'. Within the family there is a well-knit division of labour. The male members work in the field, graze cattle and carry out work connected with the cottage industries. The seniormost woman in the house, (Sayani) looks after the domestic affairs. She commands all other wives. Those wives who are fertile have more respect and are more favoured by their husbands. Often additional wives are taken for begetting children. 'Women are great assets to their husbands. They not only perform the household work, such as cooking, washing, cleaning, fetching water and rearing of children, but also help their husbands in grazing milch cattle, collecting fuel, as well as in agricultural operations' (Majumdar 1960 pp 73-74). Women may be helped voluntarily by their daughters and their husbands' sister or sisters (who by custom are not permitted to do the hard work), but they are never helped in their housework by

their husbands. The eldest male child is the inheritor of family property and the woman is not entitled to any share but is maintained by the sons. Polyandry in this context is justified on the grounds that it is necessary for the security of family property. The polyandrous relationships do not lead to jealousy between brothers. On the contrary comradeship develops, consolidating family property and cordial cooperation (ibid). Majumdar's research showed that women do all the work but do not have equal access to surplus production. The kin networks that practise polyandry are thus no less patriarchal than those which practise patriarchal monogamy. In both instances Indian women are disadvantaged even though they produce much of the wealth in labour service and in children.

The basis for wealth accumulation which led to commodity production was the unequal division of labour and access to resources between women and men in the household, which from the earliest times was central to production and from which surplus labour, and not infrequently surplus product was appropriated. Even if surplus product was not appropriated from the household in the first instance, women's labour made it possible for men to enter into and improve upon agricultural surplus production. At the time of European contact the social formation in India was characterised by a class of producers and a class of non-producers within which the surplus produced by women was appropriated by men. As the development of the State occurred this appropriation was increasingly entrenched within the wider social divisions of labour incorporating occupational specialisation. The invasions from abroad brought about some changes in land tenure practices but the essential means of wealth appropriation remained the same. Under the Muslim ruler Akbar (1556-1605) trade routes improved and trade with other countries flourished. This paralleled the development of England under Elizabeth I. His rule brought about an improvement in the position of some women but these were noblewomen whose skills were in the arts of hunting, riding and shooting. Other women were secluded from public view whilst the majority laboured in the domestic community in order to ensure that the upper castes lived in luxury and comfort.

(iv) India in transition- European contact, colonialism, and Indian patriarchy

The first relationship established between India and Europeans was based on trade. The Portuguese had already established a presence in India as a consequence of their voyages of 'discovery' from the 15th century. The Portuguese' desire for wealth and their bitter hatred of the Muslims encouraged the search for the 'Indies', and after Cape of Good Hope had been navigated the passage to India was open. But the Portuguese could not develop the import trade of India and their importance was merely in terms of the encouragement their Indian activities provided for another imperial nation, Britain.

British interest in India also stemmed from commerce but British supremacy was largely due to a coincidence. English ships were in port in India when a quarrel broke out between the Moguls and the Portuguese and the Indians accepted the English as a foil for the Portuguese. In 1612 the Indian rulers invited the British to set up a factory thinking that they could play off one European power against others.

The effect of the British presence in India on Indian trade was remarkable. In no time India was able to import items from Europe, the main import being a steady flow of silver. In return the Indians provided indigo, calico, saltpetre and sugar, all produced under Asiatic relations of production. Trade relations were developed between India and England and between India's trading partners. This developed to such an extent that the island of Bombay was given by Portugal to England as part of the dowry which Catherine of Braganza brought to her marriage to Charles II in 1661. Six years later the island was leased to the English Company in India (Moreland and Chatterjee op cit p 246).

Meanwhile the Muslim Empire was falling into decay largely through mismanagement. Mogul rulers were fighting among themselves and Hindu chieftains were re-emerging as an important political force. The English were gaining power, influence and wealth through the renting out of lands and villages in Bengal. Thus British colonisation of India progressed from trading posts to factories to forts. The fort

was crucial in the defence of property and garrisons soon assumed the proportions of townships. For the support of forts were needed lands and villages to cover expenses. In this way land taxes were introduced and Indian peasant labour exploited for the wealth of foreign company forts rather than Indian landlords (ibid).

Once the Mogul Empire had fallen territorial re-arrangements began to take place in India. Nobles, chiefs and officials all began to assert their own influence and extend their spheres of exploitation of the natural resources. Many large landholdings emerged as a consequence of these struggles for power. The year 1756 was crucial for India: the outbreak of the seven years war led to the capture of Calcutta by the ruler of Bengal, and ultimately to the establishment of British sovereignty over the whole of India.

Robert Clive of the English Company recaptured Calcutta and left for England in 1767. When he left the English Company was able to exercise sovereignty over Bengal and eventually over other areas. Administratively India was a mess. Due to the constant battles between various political factions, the standard of living of the peasants had dropped dramatically. Their poverty was exacerbated by the high land taxes they had to pay to the village headman who was supposed to collect landtax on behalf of the court officials. By the end of the 17th century a further development had occurred: the land tax went to the headman rather than the officials and this gave the headman an unprecedented control over the villagers. Some headmen took farms over which they had no historical connection and with the help of retainers they protected their new-found wealth. Ordinary farms tended to become hereditary, the eldest son of the headman gaining in the process.

By the 18th century India's wealth had been either plundered or squandered. Territories had been acquired by people other than Indians. In 1772 Warren Hastings was appointed governor of Bengal and two years later under the Regulatory Act passed by parliament in 1773 he became Governor General with authority over Bengal and Madras. Hastings' main task was to administer. This was imposed on him by the Company rather than parliament. Hastings had to convert a commercial organisation into government. He eventually paved the way for the

establishment of what came to be known as the civil government of India. He also liberated internal trade, reorganised the system of revenue and established courts of justice. In the early colonisation of India therefore the commercial company and government were collaborators, an aspect that was to have major effects on the employment, and later, migrations of Indian labourers overseas and also in the decision to terminate the indenture labour system as a system of labour migration. The commercial and trade interests of the Europeans determined the movement both of people and products within the overall colonial climate.

Once European contact with Indians had been established the social relations within India underwent significant changes. The English in their arrogance which stemmed from their position as rulers, demanded deference from Indians. This was expected regardless of the class position of the English. They began to live their lives separate from the rest and this was later enhanced by the arrival of Englishwomen. The relative openness of Englishwomen was countered by the increased seclusion of Indian women.

But it would be a mistake to argue that because white women in India went about their business openly and without purdah they were treated in an equal manner by the white men. Both sets of women, English as well as Indian had limited rights and freedoms compared to men. In the case of white women, the history of their subordination went far back into history regardless of Englishmen's own beliefs to the contrary. As Stein points out, the model that English reformers of Indian society actually held up was, of course, their own as the following comment shows:

'It remains for the natives of Bengal to complete a work already commenced; to educate their wives and daughters up to their station in society; to fit them for the open and graceful discharge of those social and domestic duties which fall in Europe to the gentler sex; and to remember that the power, the strength, and the influence of a nation in the world's history depend even more on the refinement, the dignity and the character of the mothers, than on any acuteness of intellect and any range of acquirement displayed by men' (Calcutta Review 46 1868 p 261 cited in Stein op cit p 256).

While the pressure was being put on Indians to model their women's activities on the 'ideal' white women, the pressures were equally strong for white women to act in accordance with the notions of imperial motherhood. Imperial motherhood was associated with the idea of 19th century enthusiasts for empire who saw population increase as an imperial question and attempted to get women to have more children in order to fill the 'open spaces' of the world (Davin 1978 p 10).

a. Imperialism and Women

The plunder of the colonies for raw materials, land and other natural resources set the scene for a revolution in production relations in Europe. By the late 15th and early 16th centuries a few West European merchant capitalists had turned from the putting out system of manufacture to investing in large workplaces in which they concentrated their labour force under one roof. Here the workers carried out all the operations for production. They were paid a wage which enabled the manufacturer to be freed from the responsibility of housing, clothing or feeding them. The change from paying people for their products to paying them for their labour had begun.

The industrial revolution in England could not have taken place without the the labour of women and children in England as well as the colonies, particularly India. The trade most affected after mining and metals was textile manufacturing. It was through textile manufacturing that women workers in England were linked to the workers in India. India provided England with cotton which was manufactured in English mills and then sold on the international markets. India also bought cotton from England.

The immediate consequence of factory production in England was that the Indian cotton industry suffered. The new industries created new technologies e.g. the 'flying shuttle' and the 'spinning jenny'. Initially the factory workers were all men but women and children's lower pay levels undercut men's wages. Men's unions combined to protest against women's labour (Humphries 1977, and Sen 1980) and factory legislation restricting the employment of women and children were passed. On the one hand these legislations had the effect of protecting women and children, on the other hand it became harder for

women to get jobs. Factory owners wanted cheap docile workers. For many women prostitution was a method of supplementing their meagre incomes. For others emigration to colonies was a way out. England's special relationship with India encouraged many women who could not get jobs in England to leave in search of fortunes overseas. These women took with them certain ideas about the position of women relative to men as well as other ideas about racial superiority and the construction of empire.

b. The transfer of patriarchal ideology from Britain to India

The administrators, soldiers and businessmen who went to India during British occupation came from a patriarchal tradition that had become entrenched during feudalism and early capitalism. These men's attitudes towards women of India were therefore similar to their attitudes towards Englishwomen. But these attitudes were expressed differently for each set of women. Englishwomen, particularly officers' wives and daughters, were protected from the public through the formulation of certain codes of behaviour and even cherished, while Indian women were treated at best with disdain, and at worst with abuse as objects of exchange and barter. Englishmen refused to see Indian women as possible marriage partners but were content to expect sexual services from them (Ballhatchet: 1980). Their relations with Indian women were sometimes blatantly exploitative, while the authorities attempted to discourage sexual relations between them in order to preserve the structures of power. However they conceded that large numbers of single soldiers would inevitably find their way into the 'native quarters'. The solution was to provide regulated prostitution in the army compounds. This solution elicited negative responses from moralists in England (ibid p 11). It was considered to be immoral, inhumane and in-effective (ibid).

In the initial stages of British occupation of India permanent associations between Englishmen and local women were not condemned. On the contrary, in 1687 the Court of Directors of the East India Company encouraged the growth of an Eurasian community as a support for English activities (ibid). But as British occupation increased the Eurasian community became more and more marginalised. They began to be excluded from many of the privileges given to whites. By 1791

Eurasians were no longer appointed to important posts. But while the Englishmen despised the men, they liked the women, seeing in them an exotic mixture of both east and west. By the 1800s however even associating with Indian prostitutes was discouraged and the colonisers began to increase the social distance between the rulers and the ruled. The prestige of the 'ruling race' was at stake.

The strict codes of behaviour that European men devised in India were to keep all women in check. European women were prevented from working for payment because the jobs they did failed to show the rulers in good light. 'Good' women, such as missionaries, had to be on guard constantly lest their manner offended male sensibilities. European wives were protected and cherished and were seen to be 'real' women because they were protected by men. Single women were either to be married off as soon as possible or despised if they committed themselves to social work. The 'fishing fleet' came out from England every season and were expected to find husbands among the men in India within the season. Those who failed went home in disgrace.

Indian women were treated as objects of sexual pleasure, one 'bibi' often being shared between several white men. The British increasingly came to see their position as rulers not just as a consequence of their commercial and political expertise, but also because they belonged to a different and superior race. As A.G. Russell has pointed out, it was fear that the white races felt toward the 'black and yellow', i.e. the fear of those who had made profits and had secured themselves in supremacy and who felt they could be challenged successfully if the sheer weight of numbers overbore the defenders of an economic system (Russell 1944 p 30). It was this fear that also led the men into instilling ideas of superiority of British motherhood as part of imperial rule (Davina op cit). By defining the concept of motherhood for white women, the officials negated access to motherhood sentiments for the working women of India. When it came to assessing the labouring qualifications of Indian women workers motherhood was a disadvantage rather than an asset.

The colonisation of women in the colonies and the housewifisation of women in England went hand in hand (Mies 1986 Chapter 3). These were

both part of the same imperial process, although they were separated out in women's experiences. This is illustrated by the deliberations on the proposed official handling of suttee and by the comment of Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General of India after a petition calling for the replacement of suttee by a life of ascetism..... 'a life of strict and severe morality....is commanded above every other course, and is stated to be adapted to a better state of society, such as by the Hindoos is believed to have subsisted in former times' (Stein op cit p 259). Thus while suttee was condemned by the British as being barbaric, widow austerity was recommended as an admirable alternative. There was no question that both Indian and European men shared the same views about the social control of women no longer under the immediate jurisdiction of their husbands. What was different was the handling of this situation. Some men preferred to burn such women to death, while others liked to put them away.

Thus the image of Indian women as docile housewives and devoted mothers had its origins in pre-capitalist relations of production. European contact exacerbated these images and reinforced them through the treatment of Indian women as exotic objects who were there for the pleasure of men but who could not be treated as equal to the ruling classes. This image and treatment of Indian women became institutionalised over the centuries of occupation, and while the reality of women's lives often belied the stereotypes, they were perpetuated in different social circumstances due to the nature of women's work in the domestic sphere. Under these conditions the stereotypes built up and extended over time and space. When the Indian women left for Fiji they were faced with contradictory images of their capabilities. On the one hand they were exotic and docile creatures, subject to the whim of any man, and on the other hand they were workers- genderless and hopefully childless. Upon their arrival in Fiji as part of the indentured labour force Indian women faced a different array of patriarchal attitudes that had developed specifically within the Fijian colonial/class context. This is examined next.

2. Precapitalist Modes of Production in Fiji and Women

Archeological evidence tells us that Fiji was first inhabited about 3000 years ago by people of the same cultural stock as Tongans and Samoans, i.e. the Polynesians. But at some time in Fiji's distant past Melanesians also arrived, either after 2000 or so years, or in small waves beginning only 1500 years after the first arrivals (Routledge : 1985 p 21). The new migrants blended with the original inhabitants, although there is evidence from this period of an increase in warfare (ibid).

Much of the information about the social life of early Fijians has been gleaned from pottery and other artefacts. Unfortunately there is limited understanding of traditional Fijian divisions of labour largely because the interpretations are so different, but also because the extent of the sexual division is not usually held to be an appropriate field of study. But from the few artefacts found, and the oral and mission records, some conclusions can be reached about gender and class in ancient Fijian social formations.

We have no way of knowing whether the first Fijians were hunter/gatherer nomadic peoples who 'settled' upon reaching Fiji, or whether they were already settlers in their original place of residence. It is possible that Fijians were originally nomadic, and that their last nomadic journey ended in Fiji where they were both settled agriculturalists and hunter/gatherers. Fijians appear to have had both land and sea-based productions. Evidence shows that fish, chicken, pigs and perhaps dogs were a regular part of their diet (ibid p 22). There was some horticulture. Pottery has survived the passage of time and the evidence suggests that women were the potters. There is also evidence that cannibalism was practised.

In general, judging from the material and linguistic evidence, pre-capitalist Fiji in the early years appears to have consisted of a mixture of Polynesian and Melanesian people who exhibited linguistic differences. They seem to have arrived in Fiji about 3,500 years ago and quickly settled in communities where they fished, hunted, gathered and grew food. There is much evidence of warfare, cannibalism and male aggression, indicating a patriarchal social formation with some notion

of property. The existence of a leader or chief indicates that there was ranking and that there was a class of producers supplying the non-producing classes with their needs.

There is little direct evidence which could indicate the relationship between the sexes. Some reports of rituals have been passed down and these show that important ceremonies took place in all-male audiences from which women were excluded. Sexual initiation rites of men involved blood and death rituals. Women who were included provided sexual services for manhood training but this was unusual. There is more evidence of male rather than female rituals (Gravelle: 1979 pp13-14).

In general then, the evidence concerning social divisions of labour indicate that from the earliest times, Fijian social arrangements were based on class and sexual hierarchies, and sometimes on seniority. Both men and women were producers. Women produced children, pottery and mats but they were not part of the public male world of ceremonial rituals celebrating production, warfare or pillage. Women's rituals must have taken place but there is no record of them in the history books. However, recent work by Waqavonovono indicates that women's traditional rituals were for healing rather than killing (Waqavonovono 1980). In an extensive research project involving detailed examination of seven villages and settlements in a remote mountain area of Fiji, Waqavonono shows that traditional women healers concentrated their activities only in the domestic arena, thus maintaining their invisibility. Their knowledge had been passed down the female line for centuries.

Although in traditional Fiji women do not seem to have made a meaningful contribution to all-male rituals, they did have a part to play- in sacrifice, to appease the gods. The sacrifice of women was made either to appease the gods or to maintain male power, a practice not unlike widow burning and sacrifice in India. Prior to 1700 Fijian social organization was patriarchal and appears to have had many similarities with the 'old feudal system' of the north (Williams 1982 p18). All the kings and chiefs appear to have been male, although women of chiefly rank had a higher status than all commoners, male and

female (ibid). The rulers appeared to have an extraordinary amount of power over their kin and their subjects. The reign of one, Tanoa, was filled with violence and cruelty. He drank the blood of a lesser relative who had offended him, and sentenced his youngest son to die by the club. Five wives of his son were sacrificed at the death of their husband. This practice shows that a custom similar to suttee was common in Fiji. The sacrifice of wives also shows that women were property of men and had to be destroyed along with their other possessions at death. Women of high rank could escape strangulation but only if there was no one of sufficiently high status to carry out the task. At the death rituals of men therefore, women were the victims.

The rulers expected homage from the people and failure to do this could result in loss of property and even death. Offences were not related to the seriousness of the crime itself but to the rank of the offender. Murder committed by a chief was less heinous than petty theft by a commoner. The crimes that were considered to be serious were theft, adultery, witchcraft, infringement of a tabu (sacred spot or person), disrespect to a chief, incendiarism, and treason (ibid p 29), indicating that the concept of ownership of private property and an understanding of 'statehood' existed. Private property in the hands of the chiefs was accumulated from their claim to a tribute. This could be bartered off or redistributed. For the crime of adultery the most cruel treatment would be reserved; the 'criminals' could be strangled or, after firearms had been introduced, shot. The adulterer may in turn lose his own wife if he 'possessed' one, and she would be abducted and raped by the friends of the offended male. The adulterer could also have his land and other property taken away by force.

The dignity of the chief was measured by the number of wives he had. Some had as many as one hundred. Thus, for chiefs, property in women was considered to be highly prestigious even though some wives were very old women and others mere infants. Women were also used as incentives to bravery; a woman given as a reward for valour was called the 'cable of the land' (ibid p 48), and the chief who was given her much admired and feasted. Women were also part of the war booty and could be made slaves if their husbands offended the chiefs. Mothers of

those men who had died in war could also be strangled. Nevertheless, ironically, after a successful battle, the returning warriors were greeted by women. Women were also used to negotiate for peace. It is evident that in the traditional Fijian social formation women were used for many things- they were traded, given as prizes, used for prestige and good luck, and given as part of territorial settlements. The surplus women were killed. They were used not only as forms of property but also as the vessels through which property passed.

The exchange of women as property reflected the significance of their work as producers of goods and services for use and for exchange. Besides attending to the children it was the woman's duty to fetch fuel, water and salt. Women also attended to the boiled food but men were responsible for feast food. The early Fijians had a sophisticated agricultural system with a variety of cultivated produce, part of which went to the payment of chiefly tribute. The work of women included the making of masi (paper mulberry plant grown for cloth) in some areas, and mats, bread and traditional dyes. The Fijian commercial trade which had been running for centuries was often conducted by women who exchanged masi for yams and mats. The Fijians often traded with the Tongans whose close geographical proximity made them ideal trading partners. A complex system of exchange was already taking place by the time the first Europeans arrived. The Tongans gave Samoan mats in exchange for the colourful Taveuni (Fiji) birds. The Fijians also received European goods and the loan of Tongan women. The first iron goods that were introduced into Fiji came as a result of this form of three-way bartering.

Strict rules of kin association applied among kin in Fiji. Brothers and sisters, first cousins, fathers and sons-in-law, mothers and daughters-in-law, and brothers and sisters-in-law were forbidden to speak to each other or eat from the same plate. Apparently this law also applied to husbands and wives (ibid). It was not considered seemly for a husband to sleep at home regularly. Pregnant women were forbidden to wait upon their husbands, although this may have occurred only among people of rank. Certain styles of dressing were forbidden to women. They were also betrothed at a very early age, often to old men. Although women expressed dislike of the system there was little

they could do because the practice of child betrothal permitted careful guardianship by parents. Failure to enter into full marriage with her intended could result in death of the girl, and if she was unfaithful her own friends could strangle her and then tell her betrothed. As Williams points out:

'Though not an article of trade among themselves woman is fearfully degraded in Fiji. In many parts of the group she is a beast of burden, not exempt from any kinds of labour, and forbidden to enter any temple: certain kinds of food she may eat only on sufferance, and that after her husband is finished. In youth she is the victim of lust, and in old age, of brutality' (ibid p 69).

But Williams could not see the subtle ways in which women were articles of trade. This is indicated by their exchange for wealth and prestige. Marriages were consolidation of 'houses' and involved the transfer of property between one lineage and another. The wife was expected to give birth to male children so that inheritance could be assured. Wives of the same man were in constant rivalry with each other, their competition often leading to physical blows and abuse. Sometimes favourite junior wives would destroy their unborn children so as not to bring the wrath of the senior wives upon their heads. The killing of children was also acceptable if this meant that face could be saved, or trouble with other wives avoided. Most infants killed in this manner were females, seen to be useless in war or, as some said, because they gave so much 'trouble' (ibid p 181).

(i) Traditional Fijian class relations.

In early Fiji the most basic traditional collective unit of production would have been the domestic unit, although not all production was carried out by the individuals in this collectivity. Nevertheless the family/household was (and continues to be) the primary production unit. This aspect is often ignored in studies of Fijian political economy (see for example Routledge op cit; Sutherland 1984; and Howard et al 1983). Each family had exclusive control and rights over the homesite (yavu) of their ancestors which remained the property of the patrilineal descent line (Bolabola 1986 p 4). The village (koro), where people of defined relationships lived, was under the control of

a chief. The area immediately surrounding the village site and given to food gardens was to individual male cultivators. The person who cleared the forest and started the garden was seen as the 'owner' and had special individual rights within the wider community.

Gender, seniority, and marriage determined social status, and a woman's status depended on her father. She was expected to marry a man of her social rank (ibid p 5). Older women were more respected because of their claim over knowledge. While in theory cultivation was men's work, women did much of the actual labour without access to titles of land. Women had moveable property (mats, pots and baskets) but the house they lived in and the kitchens in which they cooked were not theirs.

The next group above the domestic unit is the i-tokatoka, the unit most male scholars have identified as the important economic collectivity (see for example Sutherland op cit; Ravuvu 1983 and Nayacakalou 1975). The i-tokatoka is an expanded family or lineage based on patrilineal descent, which combined form the primary division of the village, the matagali. The matagali is the major social determinant of a person's social position at the village level. Residence in the village is determined by the wider matagali to which people belonged. The first male descendents of the original inhabitants branched out and formed their own families, assuming responsibilities for particular chiefly functions. The matagali grew from these collective families and each one eventually became the guardian of that function. The matagali sharing a common ancestry of an ancestor god formed the yavusa, (i.e. the widest patrilineal kinship unit). Within the yavusa were five different types of matagali, each responsible for a particular kind of function. These were the chiefs, the executives, the diplomats, the priests, and the warriors. All had to do with the exercise of power (Sutherland op cit p 30). The actual guardians of power were the matagali chiefs and there was also ranking between chiefs. Thus there were class differences not only between the chiefs and the commoners but also among chiefs (ibid). A number of yavusa formed a political collectivity called the vanua. The widest political collectivity, formed from a combination of vanua was the matanitu, or state.

The key to understanding gender relationships at its most basic level is the domestic collective. Within the domestic unit women's tasks were different from those of men. Their work involved child rearing, cooking, fishing, collecting food, fuel and water, herbs and bark for cloth. Women did not participate in political decisionmaking concerning land matters or village welfare. They made decisions that affected their work as homemakers. Land transactions involved women of rank only and even then under certain special conditions. This land could be taken back after some time (Bolabola 1986 p 11), although women's land rights differed from province to province.

The most important means of production was land. Although this was held collectively there is evidence also of private ownership (Sutherland op.cit p 32). The family members held the land that was in the immediate environs of their homesite but beyond that all land was collectively owned by the matagali, with some exceptions (ibid). The matagali chief could permit access to the common land. The chief controlled land and this was the source of his power and wealth.

The primary production unit being the family, each individual household had to produce their own subsistence needs, and production was carried out by all able-bodied members (ibid p 33). There was a gender and age-based division of labour in household production, and specialisation at the wider society production. The labouring classes were scattered throughout the different matagali so that each had both commoners and chiefs. Household members also relied on others for the production of material goods they could not provide. In this way exchanges took place between the producers of specialist items. Intervillage and ritualistic exchanges (solevu and kerekere) took place between the producers of these items. This was a reciprocal arrangement and what was exchanged was 'use-values' (ibid p 34). But the apparent reciprocity of the exchange masked unequal relations under which these goods were produced. Much of what was produced for exchange was produced by women but men exchanged these as part of their rituals. Sometimes women were acknowledged as the producer of the goods. Men controlled access to homesite cultivation areas, and the surplus that was generated originated within the domestic unit

itself. Part of this surplus also went to the chief as lala or tribute. The chiefs controlled access to public lands in return for lala. The tribute was paid not only to the chiefs, but also to their entourage- the executives, priests, spokesmen and warriors. All the upper classes were maintained by the workers. This exploitation was similar to the exploitation of both peasants in India and serfs in Europe and was legitimated through extra-economic means. The ideological basis for chiefly power was mana or spiritual authority. The chiefs frequently redistributed part of the surplus to show magnanimity but violence was also used to maintain chiefly authority. Success in battle gave a chief access to a greater number of tribute-paying commoners and also enhanced his reputation as a protector of his people. These were common features despite diversity of stratification, land tenure and political organisation (ibid p 39).

The elimination of women from traditional and ritual practices associated with economics and politics was also justified on extra-economic grounds. It was believed that only men should take part in traditional ceremonies and rituals of importance because they were closer to the source of power, the gods. Men's continuing presence in ritual activities in turn gave impetus for their roles as holders of sacred knowledge.

Fiji's traditional mode of production has been differently described as a 'subsistence mode' (Narayan 1984); a 'tributary mode' (Sutherland op cit); and a 'domestic mode' (Sahlins 1962 and 1972). In my view all three scholars are correct in their description but their definitions must be extended somewhat. Narayan's 'subsistence mode' is borne out by the evidence that people in Fiji grew enough for their own consumption (use value), but as Sutherland points out, he fails to understand the exploitative nature of chiefly tribute. Sutherland's 'tributary mode' is also in evidence but Sutherland failed to see that the tribute could be paid because of the surplus extracted at the level of household production (ie using sex-based division of labour), as well as from what he calls the 'productive workers', i.e. the occupational specialists, commoners and slaves (Sutherland op cit p 33). Sahlins' 'domestic mode' tells us more about the domestic production unit but cannot adequately link this to the society-wide

appropriations that were also in evidence. In other words the domestic and the tributary modes have to be seen to be inextricably linked in the Fijian social formation. Without the surplus generated in the domestic sphere the chiefs would not be able to command the tribute from the producers. The surplus produced included children as well as household and clan consumer and exchange goods and services. Women produced more of a surplus than men and the marriage contract and the location of women's activities in their husbands' households enabled their surplus product to be appropriated by both men and people of chiefly status.

This intensity of exploitation of the women and commoners by the rulers could not continue without various forms of resistance also occurring. At the time of first European contact of Fiji, the underlying contradictions were becoming apparent at two levels- at the domestic and at the chiefly levels (intra-class rivalry). These were interlinked because of the conflict between kinship and the 'state' in traditional Fijian society.

In the eighteenth century there was a huge expansion and outward migration of a group of people later known as the Bau tribe, a fierce and independent tribe of people. They settled on the south-eastern coast of Viti Levu among other emigrants but they were soon involved in war with their more permanent neighbours. By the middle of the nineteenth century Bau had become the political centre of eastern Fiji (ibid p 44). The Bauans' battles with others were a way of resolving the major contradictions which were beginning to surface, and also to contain other class conflicts that were emerging outside of their own immediate formal structure (ibid). Once the units began to align themselves with other groups on the basis of politics rather than kinship, the previous minor skirmishes took on more serious overtones. The smaller chiefs would back different high chiefs and rivalries were extended between people belonging to the same unit as well as between them and outsiders. Now confrontations were for real, involving the killing of many people, violence and overwhelming ritual cannibalism and pillage. At this point marriage alliances were formed for political reasons, leading to formations of larger political units such as the vanua, and later to the matanitu or the state.

As the units got larger and were based on politics rather than common descent, the problems of control intensified. The idea of 'state' or federation could not cope with kinship as its fundamental organizing principle. But the chiefs attempted to utilise the principle of kinship in the wider body politic. This was done through two kinship mechanisms, that of vasu, and of marriage. Both involved the relationship of women to chiefs and an understanding of overall sexual ranking.

The term vasu refers to a man's sister's son and to some extent her daughter. It is a relationship between a man and his sister's children. The sister's children can claim the man's assistance, and even his property (Routledge op cit p 36). If the man was a chief then vasu privileges permitted his sister's son access to all the resources of his uncle's clan. The vasu had much political influence but this was at variance with the increasing complexity of emerging Fijian statehood. Nevertheless a king or statesman could command the property acquired by a vasu in his state and take it as tribute. In this way many statesmen were able to acquire wealth through the vasu relationship of one of their men (ibid). The vasu was a mixed blessing; on the one hand a chief's resources could be drained by his sister's son, and on the other hand he could benefit from the goods and property brought into his state by men who had vasu relationships with other wealthy chiefs. This contradiction was becoming intensified.

Marriage was also important in the consolidation of wealth and privilege. A chief could gain much political power and prestige by contracting marriage alliances with as many women of high rank as possible. Marriages between people of high rank were interwoven with civil and political interests of the land. Young women were given in marriage to old men. But marriage alliances of this nature were not always advantageous in terms of class alliances. Ranking of both father and mother had to be considered in the recognition of children and all manner of pretenders could jostle for position or fight for leadership and status.

Thus in the rapidly changing Fiji of the eighteenth century some major contradictions were emerging in traditional alliances. The political units were becoming larger in order to survive, but kinship, including the relationships of vasu and marriage alliances were coming under threat. It was becoming obvious that the emergence of 'statehood' was in contradiction to kin-based social organization. The social relations of kinship were becoming fetters in the development of the new civil society. The rapid increase in the number of slaves taken in war made possible the emergence of absolute private property and rule of law rather than the obligations of kinship.

But this development and the further intensifying of class and kinship contradictions were hindered in some ways by the arrival of the first Europeans. At the time of first European contact and as a consequence of the major upheaval of the previous century, there were power confrontations developing at an unprecedented scale between the Bauans, who had shown their military prowess in the newly settled south-east coast, and the Rewans, the original inhabitants of the Rewa delta. The Rewans already had a 'confederation' or *matanitu* which exhibited complex gender and class-based social organization. By the mid eighteenth century alliances were being formed between the two equally powerful groups- the Bauans and the Rewans. The Bauans received an unexpected boost in their military strength by the introduction of firearms by European sailors and beachcombers who frequented the Pacific Islands at this time.

(ii) European contact, capitalist relations and patriarchal ideology in Fiji

The first reported sighting of Fiji by a white man was in 1643 when Abel Tasman, a Dutchman, came close to the islands but could not land because of bad weather. At the time of Tasman's visit the Dutch had monopolised economic dominance in Europe and were seeking to consolidate their commercial supremacy by expanding to the East Indies and the Pacific. The next sighting of Fiji was by the English in the 1770s. The English had successfully challenged Dutch commercial hegemony and were becoming an industrial rather than mere mercantile power. Colonies were needed not only for raw materials for manufacture but also as markets for industrial goods. Both James Cook and William

Bligh, the next explorers to Fiji, were part of this general British drive for commercial and strategic supremacy.

The occupation of Australia as a penal colony had further ramifications for Fiji and other similar Pacific Islands. With occupation came the introduction of capitalist relations and the formation of a 'white' society, and many of those who initially visited Australia settled instead in the islands intending to trade. The trade established between Australia, New Zealand, South East Asia and India influenced Fiji to a great extent because contact increased between outsiders and indigenous Fijians.

In the early nineteenth century the schooner Argo was wrecked on a reef in Fiji and a survivor saw sandalwood growing on the coast of Bua Bay. Once he had advertised this fact many Europeans, who were anxious to harvest the tree for the market in China, rushed to Fiji. With sandalwood came firearms to protect individual wealth and Charles Savage introduced the first firearms to Fiji. As relations between the sandalwood traders and Fijians became more established the chiefs asked for guns with which to fight their enemies. They wanted to be paid for sandalwood and other commodities in firearms and the Europeans were happy to oblige. Thus a complex trade developed: the labour of the villagers was exchanged for the labour of the ships' crew and guns for internal warfare. The introduction of firearms to Bau made an already powerful kingdom the supreme state in Fiji.

With the trade in sandalwood the Fijians began to be integrated not only into the world capitalist markets but also into the paid workforce. But the wage was not necessarily paid to the people whose labour had been hired. The payment went to the chiefs. Thus within just a few decades the class relation in Fiji underwent a dramatic shift- the chiefs and the Europeans were the employers and the commoners were the workers. However, although large numbers of Fijian men were thrown into the capitalist wage relation this did not initially affect the traditional tributary relations of production. The village production for the chiefs was continued by the women and senior people while men went to work for the Europeans. Women had to work harder at their tasks. The chiefs benefitted both ways; they

received material goods and firearms from the Europeans, and tribute from those who were left behind. Their wealth was thus accumulated in larger amounts. Similarly Europeans also gained. The chiefly structure in Fiji enabled traders and seamen to tap into the labouring class of people via the chiefs. Thus they did not have to pay wages to individual workers; the rewards were given to chiefs in return for a docile labouring force. Within this context the work of women underwent some major changes. It became more demanding because they worked in the households, in the fields and for village production. Although they were supported by both the children and the elderly their burdens increased dramatically upon European contact.

The bartering of Fijian women's sexuality also became significant with European contact. The traders were men who had been at sea for many months. When they landed on the islands they asked for women as well as food and water. The chiefs could provide the ships' crew with women. The women traded in this manner were probably of low birth so that any children of the alliance could not have claim to title or position (Knapman 1986 p 138). Prostitution was rampant. The only ships that did not buy women were the mission ships (ibid). Five women could be bought for four kegs of powder, two muskets and two square bottles of spirits. Young women were bought as servants but exploited as prostitutes (ibid).

Fijian women were abused by the traders who bought them and some even branded them as a mark of 'property' (ibid). The sexual liaisons were arranged through chiefly pimps who were rewarded well for their efforts. The women themselves did not gain in the exchange. There was little they could do when their subjugation was exacerbated by physical force. Furthermore, their colour permitted the whites to justify their subjugation on racial grounds. Thus the subjugation of women, already entrenched in the traditional context, was reproduced by white men.

In general therefore, the capitalist relations of production that were introduced by the arrival of white men did not destroy or transform the domestic relations of production. On the contrary domestic relations of exploitation were strengthened and this in turn

strengthened the tributary relations which allocated surplus to the chiefs. The chiefs still had the ability of making available, or alternatively, withdrawing the labour of their subjects from work for the Europeans. It was this tenacity of pre-capitalist modes of production that forced the whites to look elsewhere for a secure and regular source of labour which would be unfettered by pre-capitalist relations of production where workers were bonded by extra-economic means by someone else and prevented from offering their labour power freely for hire. Initially, this was provided by slaves taken in war and hired out to Europeans, and then later both Melanesian slaves/servants and Indian bonded workers were used as a source of labour power.

During the period of transition the Fijians chiefs were not totally unaffected by the contact with Europeans. They both gained and lost power and privilege in the process. On the one hand they had access to weapons and wealth derived from the new wage relation, but they also faced a certain diminishing of their status. The goods the Europeans came with were made available to all Fijians regardless of rank. Thus the chiefs became dependent on the Europeans for the maintenance of their power- they could defend their position through weapons controlled by whites, and they could keep their people subjugated by controlling their access to white goods. This dependency was recognised and exploited by Europeans.

The chiefs' power was also affected from another quarter. The arrival of European missionaries and their religion, Christianity, had a remarkably positive effect on chiefly authority. It served to reinforce and extend their power, the ideological basis of which was the mana already referred to earlier.

But the chief was not the only significant person with spiritual authority. The priest or bete (usually male) had a complementary relationship with a chief. As Williams put it: 'The priests exercise a powerful influence over the people, an influence which the chiefs employ for the strengthening of their own, by securing the divine sanction for their plans' (Williams op cit p 227). But some priests used their access to the gods to limit the authority of the chiefs: 'Occasionally, the priest is the medium of communicating to a chief

the general opinion about about some unpopular act. "The present famine eats us because you gave the large canoe to Tonga instead of Mbau....This hurricane is in consequence of your refusing the Princess to the Rewa chief. For that the gods are angry, and are punishing us". Generally, however, a good understanding exists between the Chief and the priest, and the latter takes care to make the god's utterances agree with the wishes of the former' (ibid p 226). The chief was however quite aware of the powers of the priest and took care not to offend them.

This priestly power must have placed some constraints on the chiefs' behaviour and wishes. Without the gods' consent (obtained through the priests) important battles could not be fought, nor personal wishes of the chiefs carried out. Under these circumstances perhaps it was understandable that the chiefs were quite willing to listen to white 'priests' who had the power to bestow upon them another kind of religious authority. In their conversion of the 'heathens', the missionaries targetted the chiefs first. They understood that the conversion of the chiefs would lead to the conversion of his subjects. In the process, the traditional priests, already declining as a specialist group due to the emergence of civil authority and 'statehood', became a rare species. Thus, while mission activity was directed at the chiefs, it was against priestly authority that it was most effective. The chiefs' mana was enhanced through the mission efforts and the ideological basis of their power strengthened (this is held in opposition to Sutherland's view that traditional chiefly authority was threatened by mission activity). This explains why there are few priests in Fiji now, only chiefs.

The first European missionaries to Fiji, William Cross and David Cargill, had landed at Lakeba in 1835, and upon being given pieces of land for houses for themselves and their families, they promptly erected a fence around it to mark their 'property' from the rest of the village (Sutherland op cit p 58). The notion of private property in 'things' was thus introduced, extending the principle of private property in 'people' that the Fijians already understood.

The wives of Cross and Cargill attempted to make a home for themselves in Fiji, and by example show the native men and women what the rules were for an 'appropriate' domestic life. But the missionaries did not always stop at teaching by example only. Sometimes they actively interfered with traditional practices. In 1856 a Bauan chief was tried and publicly hanged for the murder of his wife (France 1969 p 32 and nn 59 p 184). Another missionary also threatened a Lauan chief who had abducted a married woman: 'I shall report this affair to the first ship of war than comes in and you shall suffer for it, I shall not keep back anything, they shall know that you are a murderer, that you are a cannibal, a liar, a whoremonger- depend upon it I shall fully expose you...' (J.B.S. Royce, cited in France *ibid* p 32)

The missionaries' influence on gender relations was remarkable but did not go against established Fijian practice. Their idea of the differences between the sexes was mostly expressed in terms of dress and morality. The missionaries also attempted to curb native sensuality and womens' 'promiscuity'. Their view was that the Fijians lived in a perpetual 'spiritual darkness' (France *ibid* p 29) and their assumption was that the Fijians' morality would improve once he was taught how to model his household on the Mission. This could be undertaken with the help of white mission wives who were supposed to be experts in the art of domestic work, child and husbandcare. The sexual division of labour in the mission homes left the outside proselytising public work to the men and the domestic work to the women. Thus ideas of European female gentility and unequal sexual divisions were transferred to village women. The impact on Fijian women was significant because they had become dependent on European women for advice about their everyday troubles as well as help with their children. Mission rule thus had the effect of consolidating the existing class and gender social divisions.

Quite apart from gender and class divisions however, missionaries also fostered the notion of inferiority/superiority on the basis of colour. No matter how secure and close their relationship with the chiefs, the missionaries were always convinced that white people were higher in status and civilisation even though direct racism could not be expressed. Their condemnation of practices such as cannibalism and

violent warfare was always tinged with ideas about 'race' so that class and colour were intertwined in their social exchanges with the native peoples.

In Fiji missionaries set their sights on more than mere conversion. They also set about forming civil government once direct links with chiefs were established. In October 1847 at Viwa missionaries formulated some rules and attempted to obtain the consent of Christian chiefs. Although they did not meet with immediate and widespread success, they did begin to experiment with 'bourgeois legal procedures' (Sutherland op cit p 60), especially in land deals. It was not until the 1860s however and the advent of the American civil war that European activity in Fiji began to have an impact on 'government'. The American war had produced a shortage of cotton, in much demand in the factories in Europe, and Britain was eagerly seeking new sources of this raw material. In Fiji cotton was already being grown, and the Manchester Cotton Growers Association urged the Secretary of State for the Colonies to send a botanist to investigate the possibility of growing commercial cotton there. The botanist, Berthold Seeman, gave a positive report and a strong interest was expressed in annexing Fiji for Britain. This interest led to an onslaught of white planters and drifters from elsewhere in the Pacific which resulted in the 'cotton boom' lasting five years.

The most important effect of this boom was the establishment of a planting community. Accompanying this was the setting up of finance banking, commercial outlets and the infrastructure needed to get raw materials into warehouses and on ships for export. The development of capitalist commercial relations had consequences for Fijian landholdings. The chiefs felt their power (largely maintained through control over land) eroding, and they attempted to deal with this by insisting on their supreme rights over all land; they sold the same piece of land many times over, or they waged war on the settlers, burning homes and crops and sometimes killing people.

During the 1860s much land was alienated from chiefly control and labour appropriated without chiefly consent. The Fijian people could earn their living from the wage relation and this, in some ways, was

beginning to undermine the mana of the chiefs. The emergent capitalist relations of production were beginning to have a fundamental effect on chiefly authority, undermining its spiritual and material basis. Moreover, European law and order was being applied not only to Europeans but also to Fijians, much to the chiefs' anger. Additionally, Europeans were now no longer reliant on the chiefs for their labour supply; 'blackbirding' was becoming widespread and the labourers from the New Hebrides, Line and Solomon Islands were more popular because they could not run away to their chiefs and their villages for protection. Furthermore, as the 'Fiji Rush' of the 1870s got underway there was more social distance between the whites and the Fijians at the instigation of the whites. White women were brought out and genteel society established. The white women were no less racist than white men, although they expressed their racism differently. White women helped transmit and reproduce the ideology of empire, class, culture and gender by attempting to 'help' Fijian women with their housework and child rearing. They reacted to Fijians, male or female, in coloniser/colonised terms.

Attempts to form formal government were made in 1865, 1869 and 1871 (Sutherland op cit p 63). All three attempts failed because of conflicting interests. The white settlers wanted land and the Fijian chiefs, conscious that their power derived from land control, wished to hold on to it. The emerging confrontations destroyed all initial attempts to form government but by 1871 it was clear that Britain would have to take an initiative to protect settler interests. Yet they could not take action unless the consent of the powerful chiefs had been given and to this end the collaboration of Cakobau, the self-proclaimed 'king' of Bau was sought. Cakobau had converted to Christianity in the hope that his financial and political problems would be solved and it was this fear that had motivated his first offer of Fiji to Britain, more than a decade previously which had been courteously declined. Between 1861 and 1869 various attempts were made at forming a viable government but all had minimal effect. When a final offer came from a desperate Cakobau it was accepted. The Deed was signed in 1874.

From the first Britain decided to govern Fiji through the Chiefs. The British officials' first priority was to protect European interests and to safeguard capitalist relations of production. At the same time they were aware that the traditional obligations of the commoners to their chiefs would be difficult to eradicate and replace with another form of obligation- this time to the white capitalists. Thus the officials were conscious that a different kind of government was required in Fiji. This was encouraged also by the activities of the anti-slavery societies in Britain, and by the changing needs of empire which saw annexation of new territories in terms of its strategic rather than purely economic advantages. The advantages could be gained from Fiji by preserving rather than displacing traditional authority and hierarchies, and this included the preservation of patriarchal as well as class divisions. When formal rules had to be formulated for both the indigenous and a migrant group, these traditional hierarchical relations were taken seriously into consideration. This is examined in the next chapter.

Summary

In this chapter the following point is made: both Indian and Fijian pre-capitalist social relations were based on class and gender. These were accompanied by certain firm ideas about the superiority of those in power and the inferiority of those without. Such local customs, beliefs and practices were hardly likely to be challenged by the new group of rulers, the white colonisers and capitalists, who had come from their own traditional patriarchal and class-based social contexts. When they made rules for a new colony- Fiji, the indigenous patriarchal rules were taken into account. This was clearly obvious in Fiji immediately after Cession (affecting Fijian women), and at the advent of indenture in 1879 when a different set of rules (no less patriarchal and class-based) were constructed for the new migrant group- the Indians. Indian women were affected in two ways: first, they were locked into their own tradition of subservience even after the change of scenery and second, new institutions of subordination were imposed upon them. The stereotypes and imagery reinforcing the subordinate position of women accompanied this structural relation. All were premised upon the understanding that the 'femininity' of women could be exploited for private gain.

CHAPTER 3 IMPERIALISM AND UNFREE LABOUR IN FIJI

It has been suggested by Eldridge (1967 p 181) and Roy (1977 p 377) that formal British imperial contact with Fiji was established only during the period known as the 'Little England Era' or the 'Age of Separation', which were the years when colonies were not favoured by politics or public opinion. Although British policies in the annexation of territories had never been consistent, and even though profitable possibilities in Fiji were pointed out, the rejection of the initial offer of Cession was to be expected. Gone were the days when the British imperial presence in India and America was to be seen as a sign of possible future expansion.

Britain's reasons for the acquisition of new territories certainly did not arise as a consequence of some sort of official conspiracy. British imperialism appears to have passed through various stages and each stage was marked by annexation of new territories for different reasons. Some were acquired because they were of economic importance while others were annexed because of their strategic positioning with regard to trade. Still others were colonised because their acquisition could protect the older more established colonies in the area. It could be suggested therefore that the annexation of Fiji came about because of its geographical proximity to Australia and New Zealand. Fiji also provided a haven for British settlers in Australia and New Zealand who might be in trouble because of land theft.

In the age of Queen Victoria, Britain's colonial officials were undergoing some soul-searching with regard to the colonies. They wished for some consistency of plan for future annexation because the territories were widely scattered and provided no continuity in terms of administration and management. This had, of course, reflected the motives for colonisation; for example the British acquisition of India had occurred during one phase of imperialism (the Indian Empire phase), and 'settlement' of other colonies had proceeded under another phase. The assumption was that the motives for colonisation were at one time based on mercantilist interests, and at other times on actual settlement of Europeans for the purposes of encouraging 'productive'

activity. But sometimes it is not possible to identify the phase boundaries so intertwined were the motives for expansion. As problems of acquisition arose, different solutions were discussed. These were to either discard unprofitable colonies or maintain a formal presence only for the purposes of prestige (Eldridge ibid).

The seeds for expansion to Fiji lay in the middle decades of the last century, i.e. the 'Little England Era' of British imperialism (for a study of different Marxist theories of imperialism see also Brewer 1980, Lenin 1970 and Hobson 1938). During this period Britain was in the process of securing its future as a political, rather than a purely economic force. As W.T. Roy has put it:

'The inspiration for this second imperial phase lay in the expansionist philosophies of Dilke, Froude and Seeley; its first political instrument was Disraeli's ministry of 1874-80; its bard, prophet and popularizer was Kipling; its outstanding characteristic the sublime confidence displayed by its agents and preconsuls in their moral right to rule in the name of an Anglo-Saxon herrenvolk' (Roy op cit p 374).

But while the seeds of British imperialism in Fiji might have been sown in the 'Little England Era' it was not until the third phase of British imperialism that Fiji was actually annexed. This was due to the fact that Fiji's annexation went against established second phase imperial policy when critical questions were being raised about the future of Britain as an imperial power (Roy ibid). Nevertheless each application was judged on its own terms against the wider imperial policy at the time and in terms of the continuing support for and belief in Britain's imperial destiny (ibid). One also has to take into account the disjunction between 'official minds' (Kennedy in Eldridge 1984 p 36) and public opinion. Often the two coincided but at other times problems emerged that were difficult to deal with.

This chapter examines the colonisation of Fiji and the effect of the penetration of capitalist investment on unfree relations of production. It also examines the questions of 'race' and 'racism' in Fiji against the wider sentiment of racist ideology that accompanied

imperialism generally. In this chapter I argue that colonisation of Fiji occurred in the interests of capitalist development, and that capitalists were invited to invest through the provision made for the introduction of an unfree/bonded labour force from India. The exploitation of this labour was to benefit Fiji in two ways: first, it enabled the native Fijians to be exploited under traditional unfree relations of production which provided the country with revenue, and second, it permitted the industrial plantation to be set up within which indentured labourers worked for five years under contract for a maximum of 1/- (male rates) and 9d (female rates) per day. The exploitation in the plantation and Fijian peasant sectors included the appropriation of the surplus of yet another unfree/bonded set of workers- women. The 'unfreedom' of the workers was held in place and mediated by force, violence and legal contract, all extra-economic means of work compulsion. I argue that the exploitation of all types of bonded and unfree workers enabled initial capitalist accumulation to take place, which, in the twentieth century was used as a springboard for the structuring of capitalist relations of production (i.e. using 'free' waged labourers). The condition of 'unfreedom' under which women worked had the effect of ghettoising them into the domestic arena, and their position further deteriorated as a consequence of anti-women legislation passed by colonial officials. The anti-woman legislation was initially designed to contain and control Fijian women but also had an effect on the movements and autonomy of Indian women as they began to participate in greater numbers in Fiji's economic and social affairs. Finally, I argue that for women working under 'unfree' and often unwaged relations of production, the extent of exploitation was immense, extended and reinforced as it was by the ideologies of racism and domesticity. Both racism and domesticity compelled women to particular forms of structural subordination. Racism worked against all people of colour, but women were particularly vulnerable as black women. Despite these handicaps however, women resisted as best they could, refusing to give in to brutality and blatant oppression without a struggle. Women's work and resistance can be articulated with reference to colonialism, capitalist penetration and patriarchal practice in Fiji and a number of other colonies.

1. Colonial Policy in Fiji and Modes of Production

At the time of Cession Fiji had already entered the world capitalist markets with some local produce. Between 1883 and 1913 Fiji's exports increased at a rate of 4.7 per cent per annum (Knapman 1987 p 2), indicating that world capitalism was to have an impact upon the affairs of the Colony. It was up to the individual administrators to further this connection and make the Colony pay its own way.

The chiefs retained their position upon colonisation. As Knapman points out, 'The imperial impact was not a story of ruthless exploitation and dispossession of an indigenous people', although this would have been the case had the white settlers got their way. They had wanted total control of the land and labour resources of Fiji (ibid p 3). Although Cession itself had been unconditional it was understood by the Fijian chiefs that colonial rule would respect and maintain the interests of Fijian society as paramount (Macnaught 1982 p 1).

But there was little to indicate that this partnership between the chiefs and the colonial government would work. It had certainly not appeared to function comfortably in other colonies. In New Zealand for example, the native people's claim to collaboration rather than 'government' had been ignored and the Treaty of Waitangi promised much and gave nothing. There was no reason to believe that a similar fate would not befall Fiji.

Fijian chiefs' unique ability to retain their leadership over their subjects had to do with three important considerations: first of all, the face of British imperialism had changed since colonisation of New Zealand and other similar settler colonies. Secondly, the Fijian social relations were sufficiently complex to withstand the colonial onslaught unless the the material bases of the traditional structures- land and female control- were attacked. As the evidence shows, the Fijian means of production did not come under threat with the advent of colonialism, largely because Fiji was never seen as a settler colony. Nor was traditional patriarchy ever challenged. Thirdly, the first administrator, Arthur Gordon, was an independent and strong-willed person who had innovative ideas about colonial administration.

Gordon was already an experienced administrator, having spent terms in Mauritius and Trinidad. His notion of governorship included a thorough training in Fijian customs regarding land and social life. As Roy has put it: 'In brief, Gordon rapidly achieved a self-image of being not only extremely knowledgeable about all Fijian customs, but also a belief in the infallibility of his intuitions concerning what was best for his charges' (Roy op cit p 378). Gordon's saw himself as an 'anthropologist' and was always anxious to 'go native'. Yaqona was prepared for him every morning, and Fijian chiefs invited to dine at Government House (France 1969 p 103). His policies in Fiji were based on the belief that he had in-depth knowledge of the customs of the land. But unfortunately he never adequately mastered the language, nor did he fully understand the intricate complexities of the Fijian social relations. He saw himself as a Fijian 'chief', and bestowed similar privileges on his own provincial heads. The Fijians' acceptance of Gordon was motivated by expediency and they were quite happy for him to play-act. There was, however, little real communication between one who had given himself such high status and the people he wished to protect and from whom he derived his prestige.

However Gordon's administration was hardly play-acting. His governorship created what France has called a new 'orthodoxy' (ibid Chapter 7) which stemmed from his conviction that Fijians had to be protected from the exploitative practices of the white planter community. Gordon believed that his ideas of administration were in keeping with the Fijians' own traditional institutions but it has since become obvious that their respective conceptualisations of 'custom' were quite different (ibid p 107), though not necessarily in opposition. Gordon entrenched land tenure practices and social relations, and in the process he cemented aspects of traditional leadership which, prior to his governorship, had retained some fluidity of interpretation and acknowledgement. As Macnaught points out, 'the colonial order devised and imposed new, very much simplified principles of authority and territorial organisation which may or may not have meshed with pre-existing socio-political realities' (Macnaught op cit p 3). After Gordon was installed as the Supreme Chief he created various new Fijian institutions in many areas of administration. He made leading chiefs the salaried governors or Roko

Tui of fourteen provinces (ibid p 4), and of the chiefs, ten could claim to be high chiefs of their province but all were with some status or political and military connection with those under their charge.

The Fijian chiefs did not object to the sudden entrenchment in legislation of their traditional status, mainly because their command over their people was now assured in western law. In addition they received a salary for exercising their privilege. They could also claim a twentieth share of all lease monies in their province (ibid p 5). Other fringe benefits included the use of prison labour for private plantations (ibid). Most significantly, Gordon did not interfere with the traditional methods of wealth appropriation. The traditional power of the chiefs and the new status of the administrators were reinforced and extended by the native courts. The district and provincial courts implemented Native Regulations which were devised by Fijian leaders and a Board. The basic understanding in the law was that the Fijian hierarchical social relations had to be maintained if the people were to survive. As Macnaught argues:

'A man had to remain in his village, then, and keep planting (actual quantities were specified), cooperate with the chiefs in the communal enterprises (disobedience became a legal offence), bring his grievances to orderly councils and courts, and play his part in all the ceremonial occasions demanded either by custom or new order. To the European observers the Native Regulations appeared to work only in the interests of particular chiefs; in the absence of democracy the people apparently had no redress against the use of power' (ibid p 5-6).

But protest against the abuse of power was sometimes successful and government officials were called upon to settle disputes as they arose.

At the village level the turaga-ni-koro or elected village headman had to implement the order of the higher chiefs. At the same time he was held responsible for the misdemeanours of his subjects. Every month the Buli, (installed chiefs of the vanua) called a meeting of the

village heads and at this district council they discussed social and economic aspects of village life. Towards the end of the year the Bulis and chiefs met more formally and submitted resolutions to the Governor. Upon acceptance these had the impact of law. The Governor annually convened a meeting of the Council of Chiefs where officials raised matters for serious attention of the colonial government. At the end of the process, the Council sent a report to the British Crown.

There is no doubt that the collaboration between the traditional chiefs and the new administrators was meant to sanctify and reproduce the methods by which surplus was extracted at the village and domestic level. This has been dealt with differently by Fijian scholars. In the descriptive literature of pluralist writers such as Ali (1980), Spate (1959), Belshaw (1964) and others it is assumed that the native administration served to confine Fijians to the subsistence sector from which they were unable to take part in commercial ventures. In contrast to this Sutherland (1984) offers the view that after colonisation and capitalist penetration the Fijian commoners were very much connected to capitalist relations of production (my emphasis). He holds the view that the Fijians first provided the capitalists with a 'reserve army of labour' in times of need, and secondly, their labour in the village enabled those who did undertake waged work to be reproduced (i.e. maintained), thus freeing the capitalist from this responsibility. This permitted the capitalist to pay the workers less than their costs of reproduction. Thirdly, the work of the villages earned money for the government. He argues that the Fijian commoners were 'coerced through tax obligations to produce various types of commodity capital for the colonial state' (ibid p 83).

My own view is somewhat different from the writers referred to above. I argue that the colonial state formation did not permit the transformation of the Fijian traditional pre-capitalist relations of production. On the contrary, while capitalist exchange was taking place, this was not accompanied by capitalist relations of production. It was this lack of transformation into capitalist production that compelled state officials to seek elsewhere for an appropriate labour force. This decision had profound implications for Indian women. This

is examined below with reference first of all to Fijian land tenure practices and colonial government, and secondly to the introduction of 'unfree' and waged/unwaged labour.

(i) Fijian land tenure practices and colonial orthodoxy

In 1876 Gordon had asked the Council of Chiefs to outline the traditionally recognised rights to land for the purposes of legislation. This was greeted with little enthusiasm, probably because no one really knew what customary land tenure was. Each group were different in terms of individual practice, and there was some suggestion that perhaps people should be allocated land individually according to the rank of the landholders (France op cit p 110). But Gordon refused to allow such 'individualistic' sentiments. He was keen for 'communal' practices to be encased in law, and for several years arguments raged between landholders as to the validity of certain collectivities (ibid p 112). Eventually the term 'mataqali' was chosen as the basic collectivity of landownership, although it was clear that not everyone agreed with this. This was then divided into family land which could pass through the generations.

In 1879, (coinciding with the arrival of the first Indian immigrants to Fiji), the chiefs continued to debate the resolution to recognise the mataqali as the basic landholding unit because they were not anxious to have it passed as law. In the end they agreed that it was better to have a general law in order to avoid confusion. They also insisted on the inalienability of their land even though it was clear that in the past land had often been sold or given away. The decision about inalienability of land on the part of the chiefs themselves had arisen from Gordon's ideas about unilinear theories of evolution, derived from Lewis Morgan's Ancient Society (1877) in which he had described other societies like Fiji as going through the 'Middle Period of Barbarism'. In this period lands were communally owned and were inalienable. Since Fijians appeared to be passing through this evolutionary phase, Gordon decided that land tenure had to be based on 'collective' ownership and could not be sold. This was uncomfortable for the chiefs who offered the view that land had been alienated in practice (France ibid p 124).

Thus within government, senior European men assumed they knew more than the Fijians themselves what was customary traditional practice. The mission-educated Fijians reinforced this view and reproduced ideas of individual subservience to 'communal' structure, respect accorded to the chiefs and Europeans, abandonment of individual rights to land titles, and most of all, the maintenance of the traditional customs reputed to be ancient and sacred.

But it was not long after the orthodoxy was in place that it was in trouble. An ordinance had been prepared outlining the new land tenure system, and in order that future claims could be dealt with properly, each province was set the task of attempting to have the boundaries defined. The Fijians, thinking that land was going to be alienated, refused to cooperate. They had always understood their land tenure practices and preferred not to have them defined and set in concrete.

After a series of Land Commissions, the problem was defined as that of the necessity of determining social units of the claimants before investigating their claims to ancestral land. One Commissioner, David Wilkinson, hit upon the idea of finding out about kinship rather than land boundaries. The Fijians were eager to talk about their kin and this was easily the best source of information on land. But further problems arose when attempts were made to have the land disputes recorded. For the Fijians, recording a dispute meant that the decision was final and that arguments or discussions could no longer occur.

But Wilkinson made an important discovery, the significance of which has been lost on the scholars of colonial history. He discovered that the Commission received the best support when officials attempted to record 'family holdings', which he called 'septs' and also recorded as the following Fijian terms: Kausivi, kete and lewe. These subdivisions were regarded by some Fijian groups as the individual and those he considered to be part of his individual family. The Fijians enthusiastically agreed that recording landholdings in terms of the immediate family gave security to the individual and his children in the cultivation of land (ibid p 142 my emphasis). Thus, in some parts of Fiji at least the most important land-holding unit was indeed the

patriarchal family, and not the matagali, yavusa, or any other European male construct.

But the costs of recording the family landholdings as the basic unit of production could not be incurred by the colonial government. The new governor, O'Brien, insisted that matagali boundaries be drawn up because it met the 'requirements of the ordinance' (ibid). Wilkinson's later pleas to have the boundaries drawn up according to the Fijians' own wishes fell on deaf ears, even though many Fijians began to be more open about their understanding of land tenure once the patriarchal basis of landholding was acknowledged publicly. As one elder told Wilkinson, 'Why, the foundation, the bed-rock of the whole of our land system, inheritance and mode of succession has been laid bare; there is nothing more to be kept back' (ibid p 143-144). This knowledge about Fijians' own practices were ignored by the British State and the chiefs eventually collaborated because they benefitted from the appropriation of surplus that such a definition entailed. It was not until 1904 that this orthodoxy was unsuccessfully challenged by another governor, im Thurn, who wished to introduce Fijians to a greater degree of free waged work. But im Thurn's plans were thwarted by Gordon, now Lord Stanmore, who insisted that as a high chief of Fiji (being the owner of two small islands), he was against alienation of Fijian land (ibid pp 155-157).

The construction of 'traditional' landholdings was not confined only to the wider kinship collectivities. Under the new orthodoxy, women's access to land was also placed in jeopardy. Although the Fijian family was patriarchal and generally patrilocal, the rules of kinship permitted women to have access to some fruits of their labour. As Bolabola has recently shown, each family had exclusive control and rights over the homesite of their ancestors which remained the property of the patrilineal descent line and the right to 'own' land was based on the physical efforts of the primary cultivator (Bolabola op cit p 12-13). While women did not control land they were sometimes given it, either to honour them as eldest children of chiefs (by the maternal uncle), or at marriage in the form of dowry. Land given in such manner was redeemable after the women had two generations of descendents.

Land transactions between a woman's family and her husband's kin were widespread. For example, if a widow of rank had been strangled at the death of her husband, the chief's family would give her kin a piece of land to make peace. A married woman's adultery could only be forgiven if her family offered her husband a piece of land. A woman or couple who nursed a dying chief back to health were given some land as a gift. Some of these land transactions involved women of rank only, and it was also understood that it could be redeemed at some later date. In Macuata women were the vessel through which land was transferred between males, while in Lomaiviti women had usufruct only. In other parts of Fiji women had more rights over control of land- the younger, stronger women could cultivate the land and therefore have control over their means of production. Women could also take part in discussions about land transactions but they did not have the same legal status as men.

The key to understanding the seriousness of the injustice that the colonial officials committed on women lies in kinship. Since Fijian couples were traditionally patrilocal, women moved from their own mataqali at marriage to their husband's in another village. A woman did not marry within her own mataqali because such a relationship was seen as incestuous. Women's rights to land use came from their affiliation with groups, and marriage gave women usufruct to their husbands' land to enable them to perform domestic duties. Women could also have use rights to land through their mother. 'These...were transferred as a by-product of affiliation; however, certain traditional obligations had to be met and customs fulfilled to ensure that the rights of the woman were conferred on her children' (ibid p 13). A ritual took place which gave the woman's children vasu rights which permitted them to exercise land rights in her village. Even after marriage a woman would maintain contact with her village to maintain her childrens' land rights.

These rights were maintained in practice even though they were not set down in law. But after colonisation and the construction of the Native Lands Commission, women were not asked for evidence when discussions on land rights took place. Matrilineal land rights were replaced by

those fostering patrilineality (ibid p 15-21), and colonial officials also ignored women's rights in being able to return to their villages upon the deaths of their husbands.

In some ways however, colonisation did improve Fijian women rights to land although this was an unintended consequence. Since the Act regulating land tenure stipulated that all registered owners had rights, and since everyone in the matagali was registered as an owner, women could have a voice, even though this was limited by patriarchal practices. These practices always ignored and marginalised the centrality of the family in providing products for subsistence, exchange and reproduction. The white officials who came after colonisation reinforced these patriarchal objectives.

Under the new European tax structure the obligation to grow crops for tax and lala was enforced more stringently than had been customary. Under this system the commodities coffee, cinnamon, bananas, and later, coconuts were all grown in order to make Fijians 'substantial producers in their own right' (Macnaught op cit p 7). In good years some Fijians were able to realise substantial cash incomes. The workers they exploited were often prisoners who had refused or were unable to pay the poll tax (Gillion op cit p 3). Between 1877 and 1881 the Fijian 'communal' tax system brought in export earnings of 457,776 pounds sterling (cited in Sutherland op cit p 86). Additionally it boosted tax revenue. Between 1875 and 1879 it accounted for an average of 30 per cent of all total state revenue (ibid). Although it was an expedient method of exploiting Fijian labour, the planters were not the beneficiaries. They continued to complain about the scarcity of labour.

With the new taxation scheme women's burdens increased. Some had to work in tax gardens and a report sent to the colonial secretary complained of women being overworked and suffering from skin diseases through malnutrition (CSO MP 144/1877). The material deprivation of women was accompanied by patriarchal legislation. Under a regulation passed by the Native Regulation Board in 1878 it became the duty of 'every man to care well for and feed his family and household, who are dependent on him and look to him for protection' (Fiji Royal Gazette

1878 p 194). The colonial authorities were beginning to impose their own European patriarchal notions of male 'headship' and paternal protectionism on the Fijians' male-dominated social structures. In 1882 another regulation was passed, making it illegal for any man to enter the house of a married woman in the absence of her husband without 'just cause'. Further, it became unlawful for a man to approach a married woman with the intent of seducing her by any means. The penalty for disobedience was up to six months imprisonment (Fiji Royal Gazette 1883 p 10). Women who committed adultery were sentenced to make salt away from home but as the records show, many saw this as an ideal opportunity for 'going further astray' (CSO MP 1971/1880). But forcing adulterous women to serve their sentences at home was not satisfactory either for their injured husbands had to 'have her in bed, in his house, but work for the matanitu' (ibid, original emphasis). According to the old custom the cuckolded husband could at least have clubbed the offender!

But enacting regulations defining women as dependents or preventing them from associating freely with men of their choice was not sufficient to control women. Regulations were also passed preventing women from absenting themselves from their homes without permission from their Buli or chief. An offender could be brought before a District Court, and upon conviction, would be sentenced to work at her home plaiting mats or making masi, nets, pottery which were then sold in the markets by the government. Furthermore a married woman was denied the freedom to leave her village without permission from her parents, guardians or mataqali. A woman was also prohibited from entering a town, or a suburb of a town (CSO MP 1148/1887). Regulation 2 of 1887 also prohibited women from procuring or causing abortions (thus implying a control over their fertility), and Regulation 3 urged the people of the land to 'obey and respect their chiefs and magistrates in all things lawful according to their customs' (ibid).

But problems arose for Europeans when the concept of 'custom' came in conflict with the notion of 'civilisation'. If the Europeans insisted on applying 'custom' too stringently, rape and cannibalism would also have to be acceptable. Thus 'custom' often came in conflict with rule of law. In 1875 R.S. Swanston, Secretary of Native Affairs wrote to

the Governor after a visit to Macuata, urging the adoption of a code of native laws. He stated that the English laws were most unsatisfactory particularly for capital offences. For instance, while adultery was 'treated by European law as a civil offence awarding damages for loss of his wife's services', the Fijian insisted on punishment because he had been grievously insulted.

'A native's wife is his cook, his gardener, his horse and cart, his water carrier, his fish provider and the bearer of his children to him to take his name down to posterity...if his wife leave him to go to another he is totally undone'. Furthermore, 'it should be understood that every native woman has an owner...if another seduce her, the owner of the woman has been robbed. The natives apply the term "butakica", "to steal", to fornication and adultery'. Swanston urged that native laws should apply in such matters (A 13/1, M 328.9611 Rec, Cakobau Government, original emphasis).

But many commoners were only too pleased to throw off the bonds of 'custom' which forced them to provide service to the chiefs. This too had to be controlled.

Thus for Fijian women and commoners, colonial rule exacerbated already existing inequalities. But legislation had a double-edged impact: on the one hand, the so-called 'customs', which were a synonym for class and gender inequality, were written into law thus locking in place expectations that may have been negotiated over in the past. On the other hand, legislation recognised and protected the rights of individuals. As such women and commoners could, in theory, appeal to the western courts for justice. As individuals therefore, the rights of the powerless could improve.

Unfortunately however, because the Fijians were administered under a separate code, the injustices only infrequently came to the attention of the authorities. It was this unequal practice which permeated all aspects of social life in Fiji and affected others living in the colonies. It appears that injustices and inequalities were plastered on, layer after layer to contain and control conflict and contradictions.

But to return to the main question, perhaps one of the most puzzling problems that occurs in the literature on Fiji's political economy is the identification of the mode of production after colonialism and capitalist penetration. It is assumed that the appearance of the wage relation in Fiji immediately after European contact began the transition to capitalist dominance and once indentured workers, who were paid a wage, were introduced the transition to the capitalist mode of production was complete. Thus both Fijians and Indians are seen as part of the same spectrum of exploitation by capitalists and colonial agents. The opposing view is that Fijians were 'marginalised' by their allocation to the 'subsistence' economy which also enabled revenue to be earned by the colony (Narayan 1984).

In my view neither of these perspectives is adequate in the conceptualisation of Fiji's political economy. The first perspective assumes that the wage relation is all that is needed for capitalist transition to be complete, and the second assumes that those involved in 'subsistence' are outside the productive sphere; ignoring the production of surplus that was being undertaken for the capitalist markets. As I have pointed out already, the criticism of the second perspective has already been undertaken by Sutherland (op cit). I concentrate here on assessing the statement that capitalist transition was well underway at the advent of colonisation, and complete upon the introduction of indenture.

In order to find out why Indians had to be brought out from another country even when there was a substantial indigenous group capable and obviously willing to work for a wage, we have to examine the articulation between 'free and unfree' waged labour that appeared to be a feature of the Fijian social context at this time. By this method we are able to define the mode of production in evidence in Fiji, and place it within the context of the wider global capitalist relations of production that were being encouraged as a successor of the now archaic feudal relations of production. As will be shown, the capitalist relations of production could not become dominant unless labour power was 'free' from extra-economic bondage, and waged. In

order to facilitate this discussion, Robert Miles' distinction between 'free' and 'unfree' labour is used as the theoretical basis (1987).

ii Unfree labour and capitalism in Fiji

The most useful attempt made at defining peasant and proletarian production after European contact is that offered by Sutherland (ibid). He argues that prior to Cession many Fijians were already involved in the wage relation but a large part of the rewards for their labour (in cutting sandalwood and harvesting bech-de-mer) went to the chiefs who made the workers available. As he has pointed out, although capitalist relations were beginning to condition pre-capitalist ones, this had no real drastic effect on tributary relations (op cit p 55). After cotton failed Fijians went back to producing copra without any significant change in their methods or relations of production. Copra was grown for revenue under the tributary relations of production and defined as 'communal' taxation by the colonial authorities. This was an obligation not a choice, and in this manner, it has been suggested, Fijian production contributed to the reproduction of capital. Sutherland argues that a 'semi-proletarian' class had emerged with the surplus production by the 'peasants', implying that class transformation was taking place (ibid p 87). Transformation was also indicated by the constant attacks on the part of the colonial state on the payment of chiefly tribute in the early twentieth century (ibid).

According to Sutherland, the Fijians were becoming integrated into the capitalist labour process in several different ways: first, they were already 'semi-proletarians' (i.e. able to offer their labour power for sale part time or casually); secondly, they were in 'peasant' production for capitalist markets; thirdly, about 2,300 were employed in the wage sector; fourthly, they functioned as a 'reserve army' because they constituted a pool of employable people who 'could be hired and fired as the requirements of capital dictate' (ibid p 82); fifthly, even when not engaged in waged work they produced subsistence which reproduced their labour power which was then constantly available to capital, thus subsidising the cost of labour power; and finally, they contributed to the reproduction of capital in their production of various types of commodity capital for the colonial

state (ibid). Thus Sutherland argues that although proletarianisation of Fijian workers was not complete it was well on the way.

There are several problems with this description and analysis. The major problem has to do with the definition of capitalism itself and the features that constitute the capitalist mode of production—complete or incomplete. If proletarianisation of Fijians was well underway, as is indicated in this view, then there was no need to bring out a large population of Indians to work in the sugar fields after 1879. Obviously Fijians would have been able to supply this labour under various degrees of 'freedom' or 'unfreedom'. But for some reason, Fijians were unsatisfactory as regularly employed waged workers, possibly because they were not becoming proletarians fast enough. In order to comprehend the complex processes that were taking place at this time, we must define the relations that constitute 'capitalist' relations and analytically separate the terms 'capitalist relations of production' from the 'capitalist mode of production'. Furthermore we must examine capitalist markets in terms of both capitalist 'relations' and the capitalist 'mode' of production. I suspect that the collapsing of all three concepts into one have led scholars into various analytical cul-de-sacs when attempting to study and explain the 'modes of production' in Fijian political economy.

A 'capitalist mode of production' has been defined by marxists as having several features: 1. Production is for sale rather than use; 2. there is predominant mediation of exchange with money; 3. there is the existence of the capitalist with capital; 4. there is the availability and use of money and credit facilities; 5. there is competition between capitals fighting for markets; and 6. there is the existence of a market where labour power is bought and sold, the mode of exchange being money wages for a period of time or piece (contrasting with labour relations of slavery and serfdom). Further to this there is the 'freedom' of the labourer who has no other means of living except by offering his or her labour power for sale (Bottomore op cit pp 64-67).

But some of these so-called 'features' of capitalism were also present in the pre-capitalist modes of production. The remainder were not in

evidence, even during the period of transition when capitalism was reputed to have become significant as a mode of production. Firstly, in Fiji for example, even before European contact, production for sale was taking place. The production of mats, masi etc that women were involved in were made specifically for sale or barter. Furthermore, the surplus product (i.e. that the producers did not need for immediate consumption) was also sold or bartered for other goods. At the time of Cession, products were also being exchanged for money. Thus simple commodity production had already undergone a transformation prior to capitalist infiltration.

Secondly, there is no doubt that capitalist exchange (with money) was taking place in Fiji prior to Cession. The commodities copra, cotton, coffee etc were being sold for export and money was being earned and accumulated in the process. But the existence of a capitalist market tells us little about the relations of production. We can hardly assume that capitalist exchange implies capitalist relations of production. This is the trap that Gunder Frank and others of the 'development of underdevelopment' school fell into when they argued that Latin America and other colonies had been capitalist since the sixteenth century when the products of labour ended up in world capitalist markets, thus completely misleading a whole generation of third world scholars [see Rodney (1983); Beckford (1972); and Rokotuivuna et al (1973) for this position]. So access to capitalist markets cannot imply capitalist production, and it is capitalist production that is the key to understanding the capitalist mode of production.

There is also evidence that individuals with capital invested in Fiji. The first planters who came arrived with some money which they invested in plantations, making more money in the process. There was certainly evidence of mediation of exchange with money because the workers wages were paid to chiefs in cash as well as in goods. The cash was used by chiefs to accumulate other goods for the purposes of wealth creation and prestige. Further to this, there was some accumulated capital. The planters had invested heavily in Fiji during the cotton boom and the 'Fiji Rush'.

Yet, from the colonial officials' point of view this was hardly sufficient for capitalist production to be generated. There were not enough people with enough money to make more money. The settlers who had invested previously had suffered in the cotton crash and were heavily in debt (Knapman 1987 p 7). Although they agitated for more Fijian and Pacific Island labourers they were hardly in a position to inject the massive amount of capital that was needed to enable capitalist transition to take place. There was some capital but not enough, and the state could scarcely generate enough income from taxes to fund its own coffers. And because of the absence of big capital, there was also the absence of big finance houses even though much money had been generated during the cotton boom. There was certainly not enough local capital in Fiji to attract banking and credit facilities on a large scale. Finally, since there were few 'capitals' there was little competition, and certainly not the standard of competition that the Australian firm the Colonial Sugar Refining Company gave to the smaller firms in the early twentieth century. The result of this competition was the gobbling up of smaller firms and the emergence of CSR as a monopoly.

Although many of the conditions of a capitalist mode of production were present in pre-contact and transitional Fiji, it was not capitalist. There were no big capitalists who could generate the investment required and there was no labour market where labour power could be bought and sold, and where workers had no other means to earn their living except by the selling of their labour power. By 1882 only about 2,300 Fijians were in wage employment. This is hardly evidence of a predominant wage relation, perhaps one of the two basic features of capitalism as a mode of production, the other being the 'freedom' of the labourer to offer his or her labour power for sale. It is this aspect that defines the presence or absence of the capitalist mode of production as the following discussion shows.

According to Robert Miles, the capitalist mode of production depends upon the existence of a particular set of social relations of

production which permits an individual to offer labour power for sale as a commodity and allows another to buy it. He quotes Marx as saying:

'The historical conditions of its (capital) existence are by no means given with the mere circulation of money and commodities. It arises only when the owner of the means of production and subsistence finds the free worker available, on the market, as the seller of his own labour power' (Miles: 1987 p 20).

The appearance of the free worker in the market arises as a consequence of historical conditions which ultimately remove him or her from their means of production. In early capitalist England this occurred as a consequence of enclosures and scientific inventions which had the effect of transforming productive forces and relations. The key to understanding productive relations in Fiji lie in the nature of the association of the Fijian worker to his or her means of production. Fijians were never removed from their means of production. In fact, their relations with the wage sphere were mediated by their easy access to their means of production. As peasants they could choose whether or not to work for wages. Once labour power was freely available, only then the transition to capitalism could begin.

In line with this reasoning we must examine whether labour power could have been freely available in Fiji. It is Sutherland's contention that at the time of Cession capitalist relations were determining class structure. To reiterate, Sutherland has suggested that Fijian class transformation occurred through tax production for capitalist markets, through the function of Fijians workers as a 'reserve army', and through the production of labour power.

Gordon's legislation regarding preservation of Fijian 'custom' and land tenure had one main effect: it prevented Fijians by law from leaving their farms. It was legislation, not sentiment that enforced the Fijians to become farmers. Many protested because they felt overworked by the customary obligation to produce food for the new 'chiefs' as well as tribute for the old ones, indicating that their production for the capitalist markets was undertaken under unfree relations of production. Thus their contribution in the wage sphere

was restricted through extra-economic means, a mark of pre-capitalist formations.

As such the Fijians were not able to function as a 'reserve army' of labour because they were not free to be available as an employable, floating collection of workers that the capitalists could employ at will and sack at will. They were at the command of chiefs and government officials, which gave rise to settler dissatisfaction with Gordon's restrictive labour policies. At this time in Fiji there was a scarcity of labour, not an abundance.

Further, the Fijians were also alleged to be associated with capitalist production through their maintenance of labour power (through subsistence production). But we know that Gordonian policy ensured that while men produced for exchange, women and the elderly produced the subsistence. These people were not producing labour power for capital- on the contrary labourers were being produced and maintained for the government and the chiefly classes, enforced through legislation and 'custom'. It was already understood that tax production was an extension of the tribute (Macnaught op cit p 7).

Thus contrary to Sutherland's contention that relations of production were being transformed in Fiji at this time, I argue that the transition to capitalism had not occurred at all. There was an absence of 'free' waged labour that had no other means of making a living besides offering labour power for sale. The Fijian workers were locked into pre-capitalist relations of production through extra-economic compulsions derived from legislation and 'custom'. Furthermore, the workers producing and sustaining these 'unfree' workers were themselves labouring under unfree relations of production enforced through extra-economic means; Fijian women's production and maintenance of male labourers were undertaken as a consequence of kinship and marriage obligations which in turn masked the underlying property relation. Thus the transition to capitalist production was hindered by two pre-capitalist relations of production kept in place through legal and customary compulsion- tributary relations and domestic relations. The condition of unfreedom that both sets of workers laboured under was mediated by force and obligation.

This situation, however admirable from a Gordonian anthropological point of view, was not likely to make money for the Colony. Gordon's new 'orthodoxy' at the advent of Cession merely locked into place aspects of pre-capitalist relations of production which provided only limited funding. An unexpected fall in revenue and native customs and taxes in 1874, and the reduction in the initial proposed Imperial grant from 150,000 pounds to 100,000 pounds sterling placed an enormous financial strain on Fiji. Other methods had to be found for earning money and invitations were extended to prominent capitalist firms of Australasia to invest in the Colony. It was clear however, that unless suitable production conditions were provided few firms with the required capital would be interested in investing in Fiji. The premises upon which the invitations were based and the effect they had on labour power generally and Indian labour power in particular is examined next.

2. Capitalist investment in Fiji- a feminist view

By the time Gordon became Governor of Fiji he already had much administrative experience. He had been an administrator in New Brunswick, Trinidad and Mauritius (Knapman op cit 1987; Tinker 1974). However, Gordon's governorship of Fiji was unique in that there were major differences between this Colony and those that he had administered previously. To begin with, Fiji had been acquired at a later stage of British imperialism when colonies were supposed to be administered with a minimum of financial aid, and different rules of administration were required. Moreover, Fiji had no past experience of widespread slavery which might have given it a sound economic footing, nor an established agricultural base that could be exploited to generate sufficient revenue. Thus Gordon's task was not merely to administer; he had to become the architect also of a new economic base. Under these circumstances it was no wonder that Gordon's attitude towards Fiji was always tinged with a sense of proprietorship.

After the codification of Fijian 'custom' in the 1877 Native Regulations, Gordon became anxious to move the Colony from 'budget deficit to balance and then surplus' (Knapman ibid p 4) in order to

pay off the 100,000 pound sterling imperial grant. Although he had limited the involvement in capitalist production of the Fijian population, Gordon was not against capitalist investment as such. On the contrary his native administration was not intended to hinder plantation development. But since Fijian tax revenue could not be relied on in the long term to generate the surplus necessary what was required was a class of planters with sufficient capital to develop land, and a cheap and reliable labour force (Knapman *ibid*; Howard et al 1983). The land that was set aside for large-scale plantations was termed 'freehold' land by the Land Claims Commission (Knapman *ibid* p 7). The land for plantation development was taken from Fijians, and labour was provided by a different migrant group who were brought out to Fiji under a system of labour organisation called 'indenture'. Prior to the arrival of Indians the labourers had been imported from various Melanesian Islands but the activities of anti-slavery societies, and the general labour scarcity from such sources had affected this flow. Gordon thus turned to the obvious alternative for all British colonies- indentured labourers from India.

There is some confusion in the literature as to whether Gordon asked the Colonial Sugar Refining Company of Australia to invest first, or whether he initially brought in indentured Indian labourers. From the primary records it is evident that the first shipload of Indians arrived on the ship Leonidas in 1879 but that the CSR did not begin to invest until 1880 (but some authors, e.g. Lal in Saunders 1984 say 1882). Even as early as 1876 Gordon's government had already made funds available for Indian immigration but resistance from the planters to the provisions in the draft Indian Immigration Ordinance set the plan back (Gillion 1962 p 13). However Gordon himself had no doubts that this was the best plan for the Colony. Although in a speech at Vuna in 1876 he had said that Indian immigration was best for the Colony he was aware that this move would be beyond the financial means of the local planters. This indicates that he had already planned for the introduction of a different class of planter- the industrial planter.

At the time of Cession, there were in existence about 600 plantations in the islands, most of which were small and under-financed (Howard et

al op cit p 116). A few Australian companies were engaged in sugar production (begun on Wakaya Island in 1862), which was rumoured to be an excellent export crop for the Colony (Moynagh 1981 and Howard et al op cit). But sugar cane as a crop was labour intensive, and a large and preferably docile labour force was needed to produce it and to attract foreign investors. By 1877 Gordon was already negotiating the chartering of ships to carry the Indians to Fiji and in July of that year he announced the imminent departure of his Agent General of Immigration, Charles Mitchell, to India to begin negotiations with the Indian authorities (Gillion op cit). In financial terms, the Fiji government were to pay one third of the cost of introduction and repatriation of the Indian labourers. The planters were to pay the balance.

Recognising that they would never be able to afford the Indian labourers, the local small-time planters resisted Gordon's plans for the importation of Indians. The expensive provisions laid down in the draft Ordinance marginalised them; hospitals and other support structures had to be provided on plantations before they could be considered eligible for imported workers. Thus from the beginning the small European planter was eliminated from the discussion on investment and this set them on a path of economic and political destruction from which they could not recover. Instead the industrial planter was attracted. Meanwhile, Mitchell's visit to India had been a success, and after a few changes made at the request of the Indian government to the provisions in the draft Ordinance, Indians were ready to be exported to Fiji even though two earlier requests by pre-British governments in Fiji had been refused (ibid p 3). But British rule paved the way for Indian authorities to export Indians to Fiji. On May 14 1879 the first of the indentured workers (464 of them) arrived in Fiji.

On this first ship there had been an outbreak of cholera, smallpox and dysentery and Fiji's quarantine measures dictated that the ship could not land until a suitable quarrantine period had passed. The immigrants were landed on Yanuca Lailai (an islet near Levuka which had been fitted as a quarrantine depot (ibid p 64)), where they stayed for ninety days. Gordon visited the ship upon arrival and thought the

labourers he had acquired were a 'splendid set of men' (ibid p 69), even though there were women among them. He talked to them about pay, hours of work etc.

The planters however were still opposed to the scheme, and only one, J.S. Hill of Rabi took in 106 for fieldwork (ibid). This lack of enthusiasm on the part of the white planter would have suited Gordon's plans admirably for he wanted a surplus labour force, not a shortage in order to attract investors from overseas. Thus while the other planters boycotted the supply of labourers, Gordon was able to find work for them as road builders for the Public Works Department in Suva which was to be the new capital. That there was not enough work for the recently arrived labourers is obvious from the request of Charles Mitchell on 14 September 1879 that those labourers not employed be remunerated fairly for the time lost until work could be found for them....

'On their release...from quarantine it became the duty of the Government here either to provide all that were not applied for or allotted with work at the rate of wages promised to them in India or to remunerate them fairly for the time lost while waiting for employment...I think a sum of fourpence daily to the adult males and threepence daily to adult females for five days and a half a week would be a fair allowance..' (CSO MP 79/1559).

At this time the labourers had been out of work for over a month. Obviously Gordon's plan for making a cheap and plentiful labour supply available to prospective investors was going smoothly. It was not long after this that CSR expressed an interest but they were not the only keen investors. Edwards and Hoerder, Dr C.B. Chalmers and Spence Brothers were all showing eagerness to invest, although their investments were to be conditional upon regular supplies of cane as well as labouring men. All investors assumed they would be milling cane rather than growing it and thus their offer to invest was conditional upon several factors: the availability of government-supplied cane under ten year contracts; government responsibility for finding labour and fuel for mills; immunity to native laws; and free blocks of land. However, all of these demands were impossible for the

government to meet, and in 1879 CSR refused to invest on current terms (Moynagh op cit p 22). CSR were persuaded to once more think about investing by some local planters who in 1880 offered to accept a lower price for their cane, and by J.B. Thurston, who had been an important member of the Cakobau Government and had since been taken into the colonial administration. On behalf of government, Thurston was prepared to accept greater investment concessions than the year previously. The Fiji Government promised to sell the company one thousand acres of land on the Rewa at two pounds sterling an acre, and to reserve another one thousand in Savusavu Bay till 31 December 1882 by which time CSR were to have decided whether it wished to erect a mill in the vicinity of the land given to it. Two local investors, Carl Sahl and J.C. Smith, who had wished to see CSR erect a mill, promised to supply it with sugar cane and to employ the surplus labourers still in government works. The commitment made by the company was that they would, by the start of the 1882 crushing season, build on the Rewa a mill capable of producing 500 tons of sugar a month (ibid pp 24-25). This, then, was the start of a symbiotic relationship between the colonial state and the CSR in Fiji. All throughout its operations in the Colony, the company officials were able to obtain concessions from the Fiji Government by threatening to withdraw investments, always claiming that they had never really wished to invest in the first place. Yet, as the evidence in the next chapters will show, CSR did extremely well out of its Fiji operations—better in fact than its home-based ventures.

Initially, Indian labour was to be worked in the mills, not in cultivation. Cane was to be supplied by Fijians (as a tax crop it was already being grown in certain areas), and by local European planters (ibid pp 34 and 40). However Fijians disliked growing cane, and even though the government permitted the Bauans to meet part of their tax obligations by cutting cane at a shilling a ton on CSR's Nausori and Vucimaca plantations, this was not viewed by those high up in the administration as a precedent (ibid p 35). Furthermore there was no incentive for Fijians to grow cash crops unless they were forced; they had enough trouble working for the tribute, which at least also provided them with their subsistence needs.

The strength of the CSR was always in milling rather than growing cane. The general manager, Edward Knox, wished to increase the number of planters engaged in the production of cane. As he pointed out...

'It reduces by one-half the amount of capital which the miller has to find; it places between the manufacturer and the legislature a large number of permanent settlers, each of whom has a direct personal interest in securing fair and reasonable treatment for the industry with which he is connected...' (ibid pp 41-42).

Thus CSR saw the planters not only as bringing about savings in cultivation costs, they also saw them as buffers between themselves and the state in case of dispute.

There was also the need to reduce costs in the actual growing of cane, i.e. in the labour process itself. CSR had become an expert in milling but, being an efficient industrialist, Edward Knox was always keen to investigate new cultivation methods. Thus, following its expansion to Fiji and Queensland, CSR also became interested in cultivating for its own mills and began to grow cane in large quantities (ibid). This was given a boost after the crash in prices in the 1880s and 1890s when improved cultivation methods were sought. However CSR's success in milling could never be matched by its eventual expertise in cultivation. Its officials always preferred to leave the planting to individual cultivators who were reputed to be able to better control labour costs and work labourers more 'efficiently' (ibid p 43).

Increasingly however, the planters were coming under pressure to grow one crop a year rather than three times in two years in the interest of a better crop. While the miller benefitted from the sweeter cane, this was not the case for the cultivator. Furthermore, CSR did not promote better cultivation technology, or even encourage the widespread use of draught animals. As a consequence, labour costs were high. Eventually, CSR were forced to take over land abandoned by planters and, by 1889, were beginning to cultivate on their own account. They were also beginning to ask for more workers for the preparation of land for cultivation and harvesting. By 1900 CSR had begun to speculate in land and by World War I, company officials were

already preparing to lease some of its own plantation land back to planters- this time to Indian tenant farmers who had become 'free' at the end of their five year contracts.

Thus the Indians who came out from India to Fiji were intended for sugar cultivation and harvesting as such. They were brought out to lure the big investors the Colony could not otherwise attract. Once CSR was established as the major sugar company in Fiji, Indians' livelihood became tied up with CSR investment which, more than any other business, earned massive amounts of profits both for its shareholders and the Fiji Government. Thus Fiji's economic advancement was tied up with the exploitation of Indian labour in the industrial plantation and the unfree Fijian labourers on tax farms, for without the exploitation of this labour the Colony would never have been able to get on a footing as a financially independent British Colony.

I have already indicated that the Fijians were exploited as 'unfree' workers whose bondage was achieved through extra-economic means. It has similarly been understood that the introduction of Indian labourers completed the transition to capitalist dominance in Fiji because these workers were paid a wage. It is important to discuss the nature of exploitation in the plantation sector in order to establish whether capitalist production had occurred at the advent of indenture. Were the indentured labourers working under capitalist relations of production? It is necessary to explore this question in order to comprehend whether the work of Indian women can be categorised as that undertaken under capitalist or pre-capitalist relations of exploitation.

(i) Indenture as a labour process

Indentured labour can be contrasted with slave labour in terms of methods of recruitment, labour requirements and labour processes (Tinker op cit; Miles op cit). Under slave labour, the worker was removed from his or her means of production and became a commodity. The human being, and not his or her labour power entered the market for the purposes of exchange, generating exchange value. Consequently, relations between producer and non-producer were determined by the fact of possession, and by this means the non-producer was not only

able to use the labour power of the producer but also to dispose of the total production of that person's labour power (Miles *ibid* p 27). Since there was no wage relation under slavery, the slave was totally dependent on the non-producer for his or her daily sustenance and reproduction. Thus, due to the 'unfree' nature of slave relations of production, it cannot be said that slavery, even of the type that occurred in the American states and in the Carribean, was a capitalist phenomenon even though production was for capitalist markets. It can however be stated that this form of slavery did enable capitalist production to occur by its ability to generate a sufficient amount of capital. This process has been referred to by marxists as 'primitive accumulation'. Without primitive accumulation, the reproduction of capital (and thus the reproduction of people called 'capitalists') would have been thwarted.

Under indentured labour (also a mark of early colonial social formations), the nature of labour power appropriation was slightly different. Here the non-producer had a monopoly of the means of production and recruited and retained labour power of the producer by means of a formal legal contract. Under the terms of this contract, the producer alienated the use and product of his or her labour power to the non-producer for a specified period of time. Thus, contrary to the slave being exploited for life, the indentured labourer was bound (by contract backed by force) for a definite period of time. Sometimes the employer was responsible for the reproductory requirements of the indentured worker, at other times they had to supply their own food through the payment of 'wages', or as I see it, a reward. The 'wages' that indentured workers could claim did not reflect their reproductive needs- it was more likely to be a token gesture so that accusations of slavery could not stick. The bonded nature of the labour was exacerbated by a legal contract which stipulated that only the set employer, and no other, could employ the worker. Thus there was no choice for the labourer to offer his or her labour power to another employer. As Miles puts it, under indentured labour, there was no real commodification of labour power' (*ibid* p 175). There were privileges associated with the 'real' commodification of labour power. In Fiji, the Indians who became 'free' and were able to offer their labour power to whomever they chose commanded a much better wage than

those of indentured Indians, the difference amounting to sixpence. Since the payment was so little and yet the labourers had to survive for five years at least, the employers subsidised the food requirements by either growing part of the food crops (staples such as rice), or by setting up plantation shops which could be an outlet for their wholesale foodstuffs. But evidence does show that plantation shops were in many cases cheaper than Indian storekeepers, or even European storekeepers outside the plantation (see Ali op cit Chapter 3). Nevertheless, in spite of some privileges in terms of the cost of living, Indians on plantations were exploited not only with reference to their labour. Part of the meagre payments they received was taken back by the company through their shops.

Under these circumstances many Indians attempted to grow their own food. This they did with great success, even setting up Sunday markets in consequence, which the company and government officials encouraged. If Indians could grow their own food then the company or the government could withdraw from this responsibility, even to the extent of keeping down or even decreasing 'wages'.

Thus there are remarkable similarities, but also significant differences between slavery and indenture. First, they are both forms of bonded labour. However, unlike the indentured workers, the slave is bonded for life. Secondly, their reproductory costs are met in part by the employer. In the case of slaves, this was met by plantation production set aside for this purpose, and in the case of indentureds there was both plantation production and plantation shops. But in both cases the labourers supplemented these with their own home-grown food. Thirdly, the labour force was not single sexed. Both men and women were taken as workers, although in both cases women were fewer in numbers than men. But under indenture, the ratio of women to men was achieved through legislation. There appeared to be a certain necessity to specifically recruit women at the time of indenture. Fourthly there was no actual element of choice of employer as far as slavery and indenture were concerned. Both sets of workers could not choose their place of work or their boss; they had to take what was given.

At the same time however, indenture appeared to be associated with one aspect of choice- the labourer could choose whether or not to sign a contract. The slave had no such choice. He or she was abducted for their labour power. Finally, the major difference between slavery and indenture was the existence of payment. The slaves did not command payment, either for their reproduction costs or for their production of goods and services. Indentured labourers on the other hand could get a 'reward' for a job done. But both sets of workers were dependent on others to get their reproductive needs met- neither owned the means of production.(1)

For this reason it is perhaps wise to distinguish between 'unfree non-waged' labour and 'unfree waged' labour (ibid p 32). In the case of Fiji there was also appearance at this stage of 'free' waged labour, although this was not in dominance. Where this occurred however, the compulsion of the workers to offer their labour power for sale was mainly economic, although, as Miles has pointed out, the resulting relations of production are sustained by politico-legal intervention because the state intervenes primarily to 'guarantee and mediate the distribution of labour power as a commodity by means of the market (ibid p 33). In the case of 'unfree and unwaged' labour however, politico-legal restrictions directly determined the distribution of labour power and the state thus played an unmediated role in securing and maintaining the relations of production (ibid and p 34). In the case of unfree waged labour, there is state intervention in the distribution of labour power by means of market mechanisms, an intervention which 'imposes a form of direct domination and partially obviates the commodification of labour power' (ibid).

The varying forms of unfree labour discussed above cannot be said to indicate 'capitalist' relations of production which is premised upon the 'free' and 'waged' status of the producer. Furthermore, these types of labour processes are characterised by compulsion. Under slavery the compulsion was the use of direct force in the kidnapping and retention of slaves, and under indenture there was a compulsion to remain under contractual obligation, and the intention to limit the market in labour power. It is only when 'commodity production is generalized (original emphasis), and so where labour power itself is

commodified, can one refer to capitalist relations of production' (ibid pp 179-180). Contrary to what Sutherland has argued therefore, I view indentured production in Fiji as 'non-capitalist' production for capitalist markets. Under these circumstances the evidence of women's production has to be looked at from a different set of conceptual constructs.

(ii) Unfree labour and Women

Similar to slavery and indenture, domestic labour can also be seen as an unfree labour process. In the literature on domestic labour the central argument has always been the debate on the value of women's labour in the home. It is understood that labour power is produced in the home but that its producers are not the ones who sell it. Referring to labour power Bottomore says: 'It is produced, if produced be the right word, outside capitalist production, by a unit which consists of other than those who sell it. It therefore differs from any other commodity, if commodity be the right word, in that its exchange value is certainly not the sole aim, or even an aim at all, of its producers' (Bottomore op cit p 513). This skirting around of the definition of labour power production by Bottomore should not allow us to forget that labour power is a commodity. Furthermore labour power is the only commodity that adds value to other commodities. This needs to be discussed in detail.

Although labour power in fully developed capitalist production is a commodity on the market, it is apparently not produced like other commodities- it is held to be an aspect of biological and social reproduction of workers as human beings. As childbearers women produce people whose labour at the level of exchange becomes labour power, and as rearers, houseworkers, and agriculturalists women produce and process items for consumption and exchange which enable labour and labour power to be sustained and regenerated through time. The distinction between labour and labour power is only significant if we refer to the capitalist mode of production. Labour power is what workers sell to the capitalist for a wage, labour is the actual exercise of human productive powers to alter the use of value of, and add value to commodities.

Housework produces value. This value is embodied in the labour of people women (re)produce. (2) Women's labour can be said to produce both abstract labour (i.e. being the source of value in general) as well as concrete labour (i.e. producing a particular use value, e.g. cooking, weaving etc). It must be pointed out that value is not a technical relation but a social relation between people which assumes a particular material form under a mode of production. Extending and challenging Marx's notion that human labour creates value but is not itself value, feminists now argue that women's labour in the reproduction of labour power is value-creating because it not only replenishes the existing stock of labour power but increases the supply (Jagger and McBride 1985 p 192). Women's labour in the maintenance and regeneration of workers can be seen as the only labour process where the source of value is created. Men are not able to do this. They are merely the source of value, not its creators. Feminists argue that in separating out the production of things from the production and reproduction of people Marx distorted the reality of women's work, and thus the reality of work itself. As is pointed out, not only is every society sustained on a daily basis by continual procreative and nurturing activity but in every society this is done by women (ibid p 194).

It is clear however that although women's labour in the home is value-creating, this is not given a wage. Furthermore, their work is carried out under unfree relations of production whereby a contract, obligation or force can mark the production process. This refers to the marriage contract and obligatory rules, and to domestic violence. Thus women's production in the home can be carried out through extra-economic compulsion. Within capitalism and the separation of the producer from his or her means of production, the compulsion can also be economic, i.e. for survival. Thus, within domestic production women are unfree and unwaged producers, similar to slaves and indentured servants. Sometimes however, there is reward for work done. But direct violence (such as cliterodectomy, or fear of rape and domestic violence) is also used to keep women in their place. In other situations women can retain some autonomy as long as they keep to the bargain or contract implied at marriage. This can be hidden by the notions of 'motherhood' and romantic love, or family pride. Meanwhile

women produce labour power within an appropriate price range.

But certain tensions and contradictions immediately arose when women were expected to undertake other types of work apart from that in the home. Under slavery there appears to be little tension between women and men, perhaps because men and women were both in unfree relations of production. Women were doing housework for free, but since men were not earning either there may have been little need to compete for scarce resources. Under indenture as the immediate forerunner of capitalist production in some countries however, part of women's labour was paid, and another part was unpaid. This condition was not shared by men. Thus tensions developed between men and women on the basis of payment. Women resisted working for men for free. Even their sexuality was marketed by them. This situation also gave rise to resistance and to political movements.

Thus the indentured situation of Indian women in Fiji is seen from the perspective of the 'free/unfree' and 'waged/unwaged' dialectic. It is held that upon the introduction of indentured labour, the unfree but paid relations of production of indentured labourers (including females) and the unfree and unwaged relations of production of Indian women served to accumulate the funds needed for capitalist production. Fijian women's labour was used to fill the coffers of the chiefs and prop up the colonial state. All labour processes in Fiji at this time can be analysed from this perspective. At capitalist penetration, women were taking part in social production- as producers of goods and services for individual capitalists and to the state; in biological production as bearers of the next generation of workers; and as daily reproducers of the labouring population. Indian women were also a reserve army of labour for plantation production. Their ability to take part in plantation work was sometimes mediated by their enforced domestic responsibilities as (re)producers of the labour force. This had two effects: their labour power availability was curtailed over a longer period of time thus encouraging a loss of value for the capitalists; and they were themselves trapped by their domestic role and found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet alone. The particular methods that were used to exploit Indian women's labour in

Fiji and the international context in which this was taking place is examined in the next chapter. The final part of this chapter examines the significant ideology and relations of domination that were also used to mediate and keep in place this class relation- namely that of racism.

3. Racism and Unfree labour

Although imperialism began with economic and political motives it mainly affected the acquisition of land and labour of people of colour. This physical attribute was used by the colonisers to distinguish between the rulers and the ruled. As Miles has recently argued the concept of racism

'should be used to refer only to what can broadly be called an ideology' although there are difficulties in identifying the parameters of such an ideology (Miles op cit p 3).

He argues further that

'racism 'works' by attributing meanings to certain phenotypical and/or genetic characteristics of human beings in such a way as to create a system of categorisation, and by attributing additionally (negatively evaluated) characteristics to the people stored in those categories. This process of signification is therefore the basis for the creation of a hierarchy of groups, and for establishing criteria by which to include and exclude groups of people in the process of allocating resources and services' (ibid).

With reference to colonialism, Miles' definitions of 'racism' works well. Colonial expansion and enslavement were accompanied by many ideological rationales for the subjugation of millions of people and exploiting them for their labour. This was achieved through various degrees of 'racism'- outright cruelty and inhumanity, as well as the more subtle forms of paternalism and patronage which involved the fostering of the idea of 'civilisation', and also of Christianity. The underlying relation of exploitation was however the same. Eventually, and sometimes in tandem, colour prejudice became so pervasive that people of colour and their descendents were always treated as servile

and inferior, no matter what their socio-economic and political circumstances. To some extent the widespread racism was combatted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the ideology of 'nationalism', but this was a double-edged sword: nationalism served to both extend exploitation of those defined as outside the national boundaries (e.g. immigrant groups), as well as enlighten people about individualism and 'freedom of choice'. Thus the notion of nationalism could either liberate those whose labour was exploited, or extend the exploitation. Social Darwinism provided 'scientific' legitimation- as a discourse it constituted 'the colonised' as inferior/other.

The justification for racist policies and practice were many. The eminent English jurist Sir Edward Coke declared that the 'Massachusetts Negroes' were 'Animate Separate instruments of other men', while others argued that blacks were no different from indentured workers who were also exploited. The main justification for black slavery was that Africans were different from Europeans. To illtreat them or hold them in bondage was similar to holding or owning draught animals. (3) The reformists attempted to counter this by fostering Christianisation which ultimately became as corrupt as the environment in which it attempted to 'do good'. Even after emancipation in the 19th century, in the minds of many men and women the black man or woman equalled the slave despite civil rights legislation.

Recent studies by Christine Bolt shows that even though hostile British attitudes to other races evolved long before Victorian England, racial attitudes actually hardened during the second and third phases of British imperialism Bolt in Eldridge 1984 p 127 and 128). This was probably due to the declining influence of the anti-slavery movement by mid-century, and also due to the sympathy of abolitionists and missionaries to the ideology of 'empire'. In most cases however, the emancipists were ambivalent about racism, mainly because they failed to connect imperial advancement with exploitation of workers. The 19th century was also significant for the emergence of scientific racism, largely formulated by ethnologists and anthropologists who wished to prove the inferiority of blacks in the United States and the West Indies. They theorised that Europeans were

at the top of the racial hierarchy (exhibiting an advanced civilisation, anatomy and brain size) which was linked to cultural advancements in monuments, art and the construction of cities. Charles Darwin's study was used in defence of this position.

Fiji's first governor, Gordon, had formulated his policy of native land tenure and administration on the basis that Fijians were harmless children who needed to be protected. This perspective was however not applied to Indians. Victorian colonisers secretly admired the great civilisation of India and they were forced through circumstance to deal with each group of Indians separately. There was no uniform stereotype Indian. They spoke different languages and dialects and had strict spatial rules arising from constructs of 'purity' and 'pollution'. Some were also extremely wealthy, wealthier often than the Europeans who administered them. They were also educated in science, literature and art, and it was difficult to patronise them. Furthermore, since they were 'Aryans' and Queen Victoria herself had insisted that they should not be called 'black men' (Bolt *ibid* p 137), it was difficult to view them as always inferior to Europeans. The brilliance of the warrior caste was also admired, and the Indian Mutiny had already shown that Indian 'sepoys' (from the Hindi word 'sipahi', meaning soldier) could not be taken for granted.

Nevertheless not all aspects of Indian civilisation were grudgingly admired. The British attitude to sexuality was different from that held by Indians. The Europeans condemned the Indians for their past sensuality. The ancient Indian erotic art, on public display for many centuries was seen as decadence and treated with embarrassment. Often the most explicit examples of this art were destroyed. The British could not see how progress could be achieved on the basis of such sensuality. Added to this was the British contempt for Indian religious practices which were maintained despite mission attempts to convert the 'heathens'. Furthermore, the anti-female practices such as suttee were condemned and independence talks denied on the grounds that if Indians could not take care of their women, then they could not make a success of ruling their own country. It was this aspect that Gandhi turned cleverly to his advantage when he was drumming up

support for the end of indenture as a strategy for Indian Home Rule (see discussion in Chapter 7 below).

In general, whatever the degree of British rule in any of the colonies where people of different colour congregated, the colonisers found that the 'race factor' helped to justify their authority as rulers. In some cases the ideology of racism merely prevented the whites from engaging in social discourse with their black subjects no matter how wealthy or educated, and in other areas the blacks were treated as instruments of labour, and apart from the rape of women no other social discourse occurred at all. African slaves and Indian indentured servants were in this position whereas upper caste Indians from India were socially more acceptable.

The exploited black workers could not get support from their white comrades in capitalist production in the metropolis. The white workers' exploitation as factory workers was not linked to the enslavement of black people. As Bolt points out, a question was posed during the Boer War... 'what does it matter to me what is being done... amongst the blacks anywhere? All I want is victuals' (Bolt op cit p 141). The colour attribute divided the workers, and sometimes white working class men who were in charge of black workers were more cruel and inhumane than the upper class civil servants who had been taught how to 'administer' at Oxford or Cambridge (ibid). But it can also be argued that the white masters got their white workers to carry out the 'dirty' jobs requiring discipline and punishment.

Racism did not impact upon all workers in the same way. There are many accounts of slavery and indenture that indicate that the treatment of colonised women was both better and worse than that of men. It has been argued that imperialism actually improved the situation of village women who, prior to colonisation, had played a debased role relative to men (see example of James 1986 and also of anti-suttee legislation in Chapter 2). But this view, if expressed out of context can be highly problematic. While it is true that the enactment of certain legislations improved the legal condition of women, in practice colonisation exacerbated their inferior status. I do not deny that women had increasing accessibility to courts of justice,

nevertheless, in relation to men, women were disadvantaged upon the advent of colonisation (see also Davis 1981, Hooks 1981, Etienne and Leacock 1980, Mies 1986, Beneria 1982, Leon de Leal and Deere 1979). This was particularly the case where the notion of women's 'sexuality' came into conflict with the idea of women as 'worker'. On the one hand the ideology of chivalry and protectionism dictated that women were to be defended, but on the other hand, it was impossible to extend this notion to black women in the colonies. Thus race prejudice permitted the application of a different set of rules for white and black women.

(i) Women, unfree labour and racist ideology

As Davis has pointed out with reference to the enslavement of black women during slavery,

'If the most violent punishments of men consisted in floggings and mutilations, women were flogged and mutilated as well as raped. Rape, in fact, was an uncamouflaged expression of the slaveholder's economic mastery and overseer's control over black women as workers' (Davis *ibid* p 7).

Davis also argues that women were considered not only as fieldworkers but as 'breeders', and 'simply instruments guaranteeing the growth of the slave labour force' and 'animals; whose monetary value could be precisely calculated in terms of their ability to multiply their numbers' (*ibid*). Thus even their infant children could be sold away from them like 'calves from cows' (*ibid*). Just one year after the importation of Africans was disallowed, a South Carolina court ruled that female slaves had no legal claims whatever on their children. Consequently, according to this ruling, children could be sold away from their mothers at any age because ...'the young of the slaves...stand on the same footing as other animals' (Wertheimer 1977 p 109 cited in Davis *ibid*). Thus under enslavement the condition of women as chattels of slaveowners was exacerbated by their condition as mothers, or to put it another way, by their 'fact of femininity'.

Racism and gender 'articulate' (Miles *op cit* p 88) in colonial situations. As Miles points out, one basis for the articulation of racism and sexism is women's capacity to bear children. The

signification given to this serves to exclude women from a wide range of economic and political affairs in a large number of historical contexts, one of which has been to 'represent women as and ensure that they function as breeding machines' (ibid). Thus in contexts where migrations have occurred in racial terms, the 'breeding' attribute of women has been used to reproduce races of people (ibid). As was indicated in the previous chapter this includes the reproduction of the ruling classes.

But racism articulates with class and gender in the sphere of social production also. By 1790 African women were one third of the unpaid slave labour force (Smith 1985 p 343-344). 'They were preferred because they were cheap, easily identifiable and their children were a source for future labourers (Wertheimer op cit p 119 cited in Smith ibid). As slaves, women planted for the slaveowner, did their own gardening to supplement the slave rations and some were also in the industrial labour force as factory slaves (ibid p 345). But black women were not treated in the same manner when it came to the allocation of food...'Black women did the same work as men but were perceived as needing less food. The labor cost for slave women was estimated at two-thirds that of men and their children were often used to do light chores further reducing the cost' (ibid). The withholding of food and clothing could also be used as punishment.

But because blacks attempted to maintain their family structure under slavery as a mark of protest and resistance, this posed fundamental problems for black women (Jones: 1982 p 236- 237). In opposition to the amalgamation of male and female tasks in the fields, the blacks maintained a strict division of labour within their households. Thus while women were subservient within the household, this nevertheless played a key role in the freed people's struggle against racism....'for black women's full attention to the duties of motherhood deprived whites of their power over these women as field laborers and domestic servants' (ibid p 237). The slaveowner had always been able to just as easily get the female slaves to plant cotton as well as wash, iron or cook. Within the overall relations of slavery, slave women were allowed to fulfill their duties as wives and mothers as long as these did not conflict with the master's demands

(ibid p 260). Thus patriarchal and plantation production could reinforce each other.

But black slave women could never be 'mere housewives' like white women, as a consequence of their domesticity (Davis : op cit p 17). Because black women were workers like men, they were not confined totally to the domestic arena, thus avoiding the 'cult of domesticity' constricting white women. Nevertheless, after slavery, although black women and black men had been united in their struggle and contributed equally to emancipation fights, black male political leaders upheld patriarchal values (Hooks op cit p 4). Men encouraged the women to become more subservient and did not advocate the end of sexism (ibid).

A similar point of view can be articulated with reference to the literature on female indentured servants. In South Africa for example, Indian women were nurtured in an oppressive atmosphere because they went as 'unwanted cargo', accompanying the valued male labourers, 'simply because the law stipulated that each group of male workers should be accompanied by a minimum proportion (25 percent) of women' (Meer 1972 p 37). Women who found work earned five shillings a month and half of the male rations but those who were unemployed became a burden on the men they had accompanied (ibid). They turned to prostitution and a form of marriage where one woman cohabited with several men simultaneously (ibid).

Even in a situation of absolute unfreedom and blatant racism men still had power over women. In Queensland for example, Melanesian men could rape other island or aboriginal women with impunity, for in general the law was applied only when a white women had been assaulted. The rape of black women either by white or black men was not regarded as worthy of investigation (Saunders 1980 p 41). Similarly in Fiji, indentured men murdered Indian women if they broke the rules of patriarchy which included monogamy and male servicing. And in Trinidad Indian women were both producers and reproducers as well as stabilisers of the male labour force. They kept the men docile, even though they refused to submit willingly to exploitation and manipulation (Reddock 1984 pp1-2).

It could be argued that women who were taken to colonies overseas to provide unfree unwaged/waged labour were a 'reserve army' for plantation production. Although many women were recruited as independent and single labourers, the organisation of patriarchal relations on the plantation compelled women to undertake more than their share of domestic work. This was often forced upon them by slaveowners or employers, but frequently women did this out of choice, preferring to work with their children than for the plantation. Nevertheless because they were bonded to the plantation, they could be compelled to work as the need arose. There is no doubt that both slave and indentured women were seen by the owners of the means of production as (re)producers. Under the unfree relations that were necessary for primitive accumulation this was crucial for the production and appropriation of surplus. But, although women's capacity for the regeneration of the labour force was always recognised, it was not necessarily always put into practice. Under slavery, women's childbearing capacities were exploited when slavery was about to end, and under indenture this uniqueness was not significant until indenture as a relation of production was in disarray. Moreover, women's capacity to undertake field work was often mediated by their domestic 'duties' which the authorities acknowledged as appropriate. Thus women were a 'reserve army' not only for plantation production, but also for the biological regeneration of the labour force. Furthermore, women's work in the home enabled men to enter the sphere of work every morning, rejuvenated and revitalised. Ultimately this compulsion served to prevent women from earning a living altogether.

This process was not accepted without protest however. Indentured women often refused to cater for men, forcing them to pay money to get the tasks done. In Fiji one woman, Baggia, committed suicide rather than live with an old man and 'cook his rice as ordered by the overseer (CSO 86/1194 cited in Shameem 1987). Slave women protested in another way. They embraced domesticity, taking advantage of family life to build their self-respect and exercise limited autonomy. This was aided and encouraged by the housing (cabins) provided. For indentured women however, the barracks or 'lines' encouraged

individuality, not family life. In turn, similar to Afro-American slave women, this spatial condition was used as a mark of resistance.

Plantation owners responded to all these protests in different ways. Under slavery, families were often torn apart and individual members sold or bartered. Under indenture, women were forced to live with men and look after their subsistence needs. This not only ensured that the male worker was looked after, but that the female workers were kept under control. Thus women's labour on plantations under unfree relations of production was very different from that of men. Women worked alongside men, producing the surplus for the markets. In addition they maintained men and produced the next generation of workers. Racism cut across the productive spheres, exacerbating and reproducing the relations of exploitation. As a consequence of the articulation of these relations of production, much profit was accumulated encouraging the emergence of contradictions and the eventual transition (well after both indenture and slavery were over) to the capitalist mode of production.

Summary

In this chapter I have argued that the early administrators of Fiji actively sought foreign investment by making available a large surplus labouring force from India. Using Miles' constructs of 'unfree waged/unwaged' labour I have pointed out that both the native Fijians and the indentured Indians laboured under unfree relations of production which indicates that capitalism was not yet in evidence as a dominant mode of production. Although there was the formal appearance of a 'wage', this was more in the nature of a 'reward' and hardly likely to cover the costs of reproduction of those without means of production. Since both slavery and indenture as labour processes were kept in place through extra-economic compulsion and force it cannot be said that they were capitalist relations of production. On the contrary these workers laboured under unfree relations of production (pre-capitalist) for a capitalist market and produced the surplus for primitive accumulation.

Women can also be defined within this notion of 'unfreedom'. Not only were women bonded in their own right as plantation workers, they were

also bonded to men as the need arose. Therefore we can argue that women produced a greater surplus than men, for they also (re)produced the next generation of workers and maintained those of the present. Furthermore women acted as a 'reserve army' of labourers- producing plantation goods and babies when needed. This exploitation was not undertaken without protest. Each set of women responded to their exploitation in terms of their own labour position, a situation frustrating for many plantation owners. The next chapter outlines in more specific terms the processes of exploitation of indentured women of India.

The organisational details of the 'Indenture Labour System' as it operated in the British Colonies in the nineteenth century have been the focus of attention for many scholars (see for example Gillion: 1962; Tinker: 1974; Ali: 1980; Naidu: 1980; Lal: 1983; Saunders: 1984). However there is little which concentrates on the specific mechanisms by which women were obtained, recruited, contracted, worked, and exploited on the sugar plantations of the British colonies. In this chapter the general material on indenture is referred to in order to advance the argument that women's (re)productive capacities were crucial in the accumulation of wealth in the sugar colonies, and that this was exploited in specific ways by all men on sugar plantations. The first part of this chapter outlines the process of indenture as a 'system'. In the second part I examine the precise situation of women within this overall process. This background is necessary to highlight the view that the particular circumstances of Indian women in Fiji as (re)producers of surplus wealth for non-producers was most significant. Capitalist infiltration of the colonies cannot be examined merely in terms of what has hitherto been described as 'productive' activity, i.e. that carried out in the public arena; (re) production involved both production for markets overseas and domestic production. As will be indicated in this chapter Indian women's labour during the period of transition was significant for the accumulation of wealth in the colonies where Indians were sent.

In the last chapter the argument was advanced that indenture was not slavery. The mode of organisation of the labour force under indenture was specific to the nineteenth century context where slavery had been abolished. (1) Thus, although both slaves and indentured workers worked under bondage, the degree of unfreedom experienced by each was significantly different from the other. Nevertheless, as Tinker and others have pointed out, indenture, coming so soon after the legacy of slavery, could not fail to be influenced by certain ideas and organisational rules that had been a feature of that permanent form of bondage (Tinker *ibid*; Saunders *ibid*). Indentured conditions were based

on those of slavery except for length of servitude. On the sugar plantations the product was still sugar cane grown under plantation conditions. In many cases even the owners remained the same. Only the face of the labourers changed; after the end of slavery very few former slaves chose to remain on plantations as indentured servants or sharecroppers.

Officials in Britain were aware that other forms of servitude could resemble slavery in substance, though they were legally different. For example in South Africa, the Afrikaners held their 'Cape Coloured' servants in a semi-servile status under a system not unlike indenture (Tinker *ibid* p 15). In South India, as a consequence of traditional land tenures being replaced by private property in land and the demand for government revenue, the traditional co-ownership of land in the village declined, leading to the introduction of a system of bondage through a marriage loan. By the mid nineteenth century this was being discharged through written contracts for manual labour (Jain in Saunders 1984 pp 167-169). In other colonies, under the conditions of emancipation, the former slaves were bound as apprentices by legislation to their old masters for a period of seven years. Failure to honour the contract led to a term of imprisonment which invariably meant enforced work in chain-gangs for their own employer (Tinker *op cit* p 17). The legislations were intended to hinder the formation of a peasant class, thus Masters and Servants and Vagrancy laws were enacted to stop workers leaving the plantations. In many ways the indentured servitude of former slaves was worse than slavery, for the employers knew that they could drive their workers until they dropped dead from exhaustion. There was no need to preserve the lives of workers if they were contracted for only a limited period. Since the labourers were imported as adults from India, their initial reproduction costs had already been met by the home country. India's workers had been raised free of charge, as it were, for the planters in the sugar colonies.

Indenture's similarity with slavery was exploited by the planters. This was particularly evident in Mauritius. Mauritius was among the most oppressive territories in the period immediately after emancipation (*ibid*). The slaves became apprentices in 1835. As many as

one-seventh of them had originally been taken from South India. The Mauritius planters had thus been the first to look towards India to make up their plantation labour force, and an ordinance drafted in 1835 defined the terms upon which Indian labour would be imported. This, however, was not permitted by Lord Glenelg, Secretary for the Colonies. In a letter to the Governor of Mauritius Glenelg expressed the opinion that the new regulations would amount to a substitution of 'some new coercion for that state of slavery which had been abolished' (ibid). Two years later, Ordinance 6 of 1838 laid down new terms which also included residual elements of slave laws. In Demerara (later British Guiana) some of the planters also intended that Indian labourers would replace slaves because they formulated an ordinance that appeared to provide for slavery. In 1839 this was also disallowed by Glenelg.

But the labour shortage in Mauritius was getting acute. The former slaves refused to work for their masters who still saw them as their property. Moreover if free labour or some form of free labour could be procured, it would be cheaper than slave labour. Slave labour was dear only if free labour was available in abundance (Green in Saunders 1984 pp 1-41). In 1840 the main labour contingent of 18,000 was mostly Indian. But while Mauritius planters could still call upon a labouring population, the other colonies faced a severe shortage. The British West Indies had no labour pool to command and thus there began a period of decay in Jamaica and the smaller islands. Since the planters were looking towards India, officials in India began to prepare for the demand that they predicted would arise. Although they took account of the potential danger of further enslavement of people, the officials could not foresee all the problems. As they discovered after just a few years, the planters could never abandon their history of slave ownership (Tinker op cit p 18). The system of indenture was viewed by them as a 'new system of slavery', incorporating many of the repressive features of the old system. As Tinker put it, 'Slavery produced both a system and an attitude of mind, in which the products determined everything, not the people' (ibid p 19). In the setting up of the new system it was virtually impossible to escape the regimental legacy of slavery.

In the transition between slavery and indenture, three significant aspects had to be considered by those administering the new movement of labour. These were: 1) the legislation under which Indian workers were to be obtained and their contractual obligations 2) the availability of a labour force in India itself; and 3) the context within which the Indians were to work. These will be examined individually to show how indenture impacted upon all labourers, male and female.

1. Legislative Changes

In the setting up of the new system, various legislative changes had to be made. The first move towards the export of Indian labourers under government regulation was provided by the French Indian Ocean island of Reunion where in 1826 terms were laid down for the importation of Indians (ibid p 61). Under this legislation, the worker was required to appear before a magistrate and declare that he was leaving his home voluntarily to labour under contractual obligation for five years at Rs 8 per month and rations. In Mauritius, although provision had been made in 1829, the first substantive group of workers did not arrive until 1834. These Indians also had to appear before a magistrate but other government regulations were not used to monitor their contracts (ibid p 63). It was already recognised by some people that indentured labour might be even cheaper than slave labour. G. Arbuthnot of the Calcutta firm of F.M.Gillanders and G. Arbuthnot, which had plantation interests in Mauritius and therefore took a leading part in the new traffic, believed that the cost of Indians 'is not half that of a slave' (Checkland 1971 p 318 cited in Tinker ibid). By 1838, more than 25,000 Indians had been shipped to Mauritius at a cost of about 280,000 pounds (North-Coombs in Saunders 1984 p 87) In this year a resolution for a general scheme of immigration was passed by the Court of Policy, the local legislature (Tinker op cit p 63).

Setting up the new system was not an easy matter. The Government of India attempted to lay down specific regulations by asking the Law Commission to make regulatory proposals under Act V of 1837. These were that the intending emigrant had to appear before an officer designated by the Government of India, along with the emigration agent, who was required to produce a written statement of the terms of

the contract. The length of service was to be five years, renewable for further five year terms. The emigrant had to be returned, at the end of his service, to the port of departure. The vessel taking the emigrants was required to conform to specified standards of space, dietary etc and each ship was to carry a medical man to care for the 'coolies'. (2) The ship's surgeon was not available for coolies returning to India. (Tinker *ibid* p64).

But no sooner had news of the new system reached the ears of the philanthropists in India and Britain that opposition was expressed in the strongest terms. By 1838 the anti-slavery journal, British Emancipator had already published a copy of the Order in Council of July 1837 which had legalised the traffic to Demerara. In a parliamentary debate which was instigated by the abolitionists, critical questions were asked and Lord Glenelg prepared legislation to regularise the traffic, limiting the duration of written labour contracts to one year. He also cancelled the provision that permitted the labourer to commit himself to 'an unknown master in an unknown land' (Tinker *ibid* p 65). Contracts could now be signed only in the country where the labourer was to work. In the 1830s, the political and social agitation of influential anti-slavists were still difficult to ignore. It was also beginning to be revealed that many coolies were being kidnapped for work in Mauritius. Once news of this reached the Indian Government authorities, no further emigration was permitted until an enquiry was held (*ibid*), despite the planters' assurances that the abuses could be controlled through legislation. The final report of the committee became available in 1840 and outlined the evils of recruitment in India, and the pathetic accounts of the labourers themselves. This report resulted in the prohibition of all overseas emigration for labour purposes except for British Burma and the Straits Settlements which were considered to be dependencies of British India (*ibid* p 69).

It was not long before powerful groups of planters in Mauritius and the Carribean attempted to overturn the ban but the anti-slavery groups worked equally hard to ensure that it remained in force (*ibid* p 70). But officials in Britain were faced with a dilemma. Many were sympathetic to the anti-slavery leagues but they also had to take into

account the profitability of the Mauritius sugar cane industry. In 1840 Mauritius was very significant as Britain's first ranking sugar colony. Thus there was the 'obligation imposed upon the government, both imperial and local, to support to the utmost of its ability at this crisis, the struggling sugar-grower, by having recourse to every legitimate means within its competency to aid the efforts now making to diminish the cost of production; for in this after all lies the solution to the problems' (Higginson to Earl Grey 1852 cited in North-Coombs in Saunders 1984 p 93). Finally in 1840, Lord John Russell, Secretary for the Colonies recommended that coolie emigration might be resumed to Mauritius under strict rules, although the ban remained in the case of the West Indies. In the verbal and written debates that followed, condemnation of the indenture system per se was accompanied by detailed reports about the specific conditions under which the labourers had to work. The responses were conflicting. It was recognised that although the methods of recruitment and the condition of labourers as workers were atrocious, some form of emigration was needed in order that planters of the colonies could make a profit. The discussion continued in London where the Governor-General designate, Lord Ellenborough and Lord Stanley, the Secretary for the Colonies drafted an agreement under which emigration could resume to Mauritius. It was argued that indentures were to be of one year duration, and return passages for time-expired emigrants (those who had finished their term) were to be made available. An agent for the Government of India was to be appointed in Mauritius and paid for by the government there. Stanley also suggested that the proportion of females among the emigrants should form not more than one third of the total number, while Ellenborough wanted one quarter (Tinker op cit p 73). The evidence at hand does not indicate exactly why these proportion were more acceptable than any other. It probably reflects the planters consistent request for male workers rather than females. If the colonies in question were to make money then some aspects of the planters' requests always had to be adhered to, subject to further negotiation. Although this new resolution was opposed vehemently by the anti-slavery societies, their powers were now beginning to be curtailed. Indian emigration to the Colonies was resumed once again.

Emigration to Mauritius was permitted from Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. At Calcutta the Agency firms prepared for exportation, and the first ship arrived at Port Louis in 1843 with 233 adults and three children. After the statutory forty-eight hour wait, all the Indians were taken, for one year at \$2.50 (dollars) per mensem on three estates. The women were not signed up: they went with their men (ibid p 75). During that year, 30,218 men and 4,307 women were to pass through the immigration depot.

Although young single immigrants were wanted by the planters, in 1843 the desirability of family emigration was expressed in correspondence between the Colonial Secretary of Mauritius, G.F. Dick and the Mauritius Government Protector of Immigrants, Charles Anderson (ibid p 77). The reason given by the colonial officials for planning family emigration was that permanent, rather than temporary settlement was the objective. While individual planters wanted to make quick money by exploiting single workers for a limited period of time, the colonial officials had the foresight to realise that family emigration would ensure generational reproduction of the labouring class. This tension over family versus single emigration was always at the heart of disputes between planters and colonial officials.

Another area of concern on the part of the colonial officials was the history of various forms of abuse of labourers by the planters. Although many of the abuses that had previously been part of the system had been eradicated, further controls were needed to ensure that the Indians would be protected from unscrupulous businessmen who made profits out of trading in humans. Various personal accounts of the condition of labourers on the plantations were also beginning to worry the legislators. For example, Captain Knox, the master of the John Calvin told of the practice Indian women had of 'changing their husbands' and also of the 'sodomy' that prevailed among the men 'to a dreadful extent'. He also accused plantation sirdars of various acts of cruelty towards the Indian workers (ibid p 78). The whole system was again discredited when the treatment of repatriated Indians was made public. It appeared that there was a high mortality rate of returning Indians who were forced to stay in crowded accommodation on board the ships.

Despite these problems, by 1844 moves were already being made for the resumption of emigration to the West Indies and by November of that year the Government of India passed Act XXI of 1844 legalising emigration to Jamaica, Trinidad and Demerara. The first labourers left for the West Indies in 1845. This emigration came to a halt after only three years due to the crisis in the West Indian sugar industry.

Sugar interests in some of the colonies were beginning to agitate for stiffer contracts in retaliation against Indians who were accused of 'vagrancy' and wandering (ibid p 82). They wished to bind the workers more firmly to the plantation. The sugar barons also wished to extend the period of indenture and restrict the right of time-expired Indians to return passages back to their homes. In 1845 the Mauritius Council of Government urged a resumption of five year contracts, strictly enforced by vagrancy laws directed against the out-of-work. The new Secretary of State, Lord Grey (also known as Earl Grey) was in agreement with extensions in general, believing that people of whatever race or colour would not submit to steady labour unless they were 'under the influence of some very powerful motive' (ibid p 83). Although he was against some of the harsher provisions of the proposed Mauritius ordinance, he was in favour of making the labourers work for some 'considerable time' (ibid). In keeping with his advice the Mauritius legislature passed Ordinance 22 of 1847 which imposed a penalty fine on all labourers of 4 shillings for every month not spent under contract, and imprisonment for non-payment at the rate of 6d per day (or eight days for one month's fine). In 1849 the Mauritius planters obtained the first contracts of employment for a minimum of three years (ibid p 84). In 1847 in British Guiana the planters were also permitted to make three year contracts as a temporary measure which the anti-slavists attempted without success to overturn (ibid).

Longer contracts were being agitated for by the planters in Trinidad also. By 1854, the Duke of Newcastle, then Secretary of State, sanctioned three year contracts for British Guiana and Trinidad, laying down a further proviso that any coolie wishing to free himself after this must pay a commutation fee of five pounds. Otherwise he must re-indenture for a further two year term, with the option of

commuting the last year for two pounds and ten shillings (ibid p 85). By 1862 five year contracts for male workers were accepted for all the sugar colonies and remained in force until indenture came to an end in 1916-1920. In this year provision was also made to engage women (North-Coombs in Saunders 1984 p 97). The planters were keen to keep the Indians for a longer term in the colonies, and their influence with colonial governments led to the offer of incentives such as gratuities and Patent of Citizenship (Tinker op cit p 86). Eventually, as happened in the case of Fiji, the Indians were recruited and contracted for a period of five years, after which they could re-indenture for a further five year period. The incentive to re-engage rather than return home was provided by the directive that repatriates were to pay their own passages back after five years but would have these paid for them by the respective governments after the ten year engagement. As is obvious by the large numbers of Indians still in residence in practically all of the former colonies, most chose or were compelled for financial reasons to stay for good.

2. Surplus labour in India-the people

The people who were recruited to labour in the colonies had traditionally been tied to the land. In Chapter 2 I illustrated the methods by which Indian peasants had been forced into varying relations of exploitation which extracted their surplus labour and product for the class of non-producers. Colonisation of India eventually had the effect of removing peasant producers from their land and by the early nineteenth century a great pool of surplus labour had accumulated in the cities of India. Economically and politically the concept of servitude was already accepted in India, although I do not go as far as Tinker to suggest that this was also seen as an 'honourable' profession (ibid p 41). As always, people much rather worked for themselves than for others and it was only due to the enforced unfree relations of production in pre-capitalist India that the Indians accepted any form of servitude, largely in order to escape starvation. By the end of the eighteenth century, Indian labourers were to be found in the ports of South East Asia. These had arrived there either as voluntary migrants or as slaves. These people were of a labouring caste because there was no need to look for working men among the high castes. 'Manpower' was first of all

provided by the hill tribes (indigenous people), known as the Dhangars (ibid p 46). When these original inhabitants of India had initially come into contact with the plains people they had got into the habit of hiring themselves out as labourers. They were considered to be less 'civilised' than the plains people (who were settled agriculturalists rather than hunters/gatherers and slash and burn agriculturalists like the hill people). The hill tribes had no dietary taboos and were simple people who invariably worked for a pittance. Thus they were preferred by the European planters with whom they eventually came into contact in the plains of India. The planters had initially found it difficult to recruit landed peasants for the tea and coffee plantations (ibid pp 47-48). The 'Hill Coolies' were attracted to Calcutta and were soon bound for Mauritius and Demerara. They formed a large proportion of the labour contingent in the 1840s and 1850s. But by the late 1850s they were no longer the main supply of workers. Their high mortality rate caused officials to look elsewhere for their labour. (3) Moreover, from the 1860s, their labour could also be absorbed in the flourishing tea industry although they were always seen as the best workers anywhere (ibid p 50).

Other sources of labour were now being sought. Indians were already available in the ports of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. They were domestic servants, coachmen, grooms, washermen, footmen, entertainers, dancers, musicians and prostitutes. Although the people recruited were supposed to be suitable for agricultural work, many had never picked up a shovel or used a cane knife. Somehow they slipped through, causing problems for the planters to whom they were eventually allocated. In the late 1870s a ship load of emigrants to Surinam included 'A batch of dancing girls and women of a similar description, with their male attendants. These people laughed at the idea of becoming agriculturalists' (ibid p 52).

Apart from the aboriginal tribal groups who were recruited from around Calcutta, the villagers of Northern Bihar and the North-Western Provinces (later United Provinces) also became emigrants. The Biharis were reputed to be patient and hardworking. The 'low' caste people of the Bengal Presidency, and the Banaras Province who had felt the brunt of enclosures as a consequence of British taxation of landlords were

also a source. 'In Bihar there was a kind of semi-slavery known as kamiuti, by which the poor people sold their services, and sometimes those of their children in years to come, in order to obtain resources to meet their pressing needs' (ibid p 53, author's emphasis). These people were easy to recruit as they wanted to escape their generational servitude and readily accepted a trade-in of five years. The wage that these people asked for in India was merely one-sixth of one penny, so desperate was their situation. It was this kind of evidence that planters in the colonies eventually used against the immigrants when they agitated for higher wages on sugar plantations.

Early records of recruits to the colonies show a mixture of religions and castes, although most were of the labouring castes. In 1857 the Emigration Agent in Calcutta, Thomas Caird gave the main districts of recruitment as Banaras, Azamghar, Gorakhpur, and Jaunpaur in the North-Western Provinces, and Ghazipur, Muzaffarpur, Champaran, Shahabad, Patna and Gaya in Bihar, besides Hazaribagh and Chota Nagpur which were the homelands of the Dhangars (ibid p 54). Most emigrants left from Calcutta, and eventually Madras, but Bombay was never as important. In South India, the recruits were from the Tamil districts (which had a vast surplus labour pool), and among them the untouchables were most available. Many disliked this caste of Indians, seeing them as unwilling workers (ibid p 55). The emigration from India represented an average sample of the rural population, excluding the upper castes and those of the lowest (ibid). The officials in the colonies believed that they always received the lowest castes from India, ignoring the advantage they took of extracting the maximum amount of surplus from them. If they were not seen as human beings then there was no need to make their labouring lives easier to bear.

The main movement of indentured workers took place before 1880 (ibid p 56). Most went to Mauritius but also later to the Caribbean, Natal, Ceylon, Burma, and the Straits Settlements. In the twentieth century Malaya and Fiji were significant destinations for recruits. In the twentieth century, Madras became a significant point of embarkation, although it could never match emigration from Calcutta. Punjabis and Pathans were also recruited although they were not popular due to their alleged arrogance. By 1908 in terms of Calcutta emigration, most

recruits were taken from the eastern districts of the United Provinces. During the ninety years 1830-1920 over one million Indians were transported to the colonies (Lal in Saunders 1984 p 126), although Tinker maintains that this figure had been reached before 1870 (Tinker: ~~op~~ cit pp 113-114).

The process of indenture for the individual began in the village or town where he or she had been recruited. The channels of recruitment are presented in diagram form in Appendix 1. There were many reasons why an Indian would wish to emigrate. Tinker sees both 'pull and push factors' operating in the recruitment of Indians, although he considers that 'push factors' such as crop failure, famines, floods and other disasters as having a great deal of impact upon emigration (ibid p 118-119). In the 'good' years, i.e. the years of natural disasters and mass starvation, the colonial planters could look forward to an increased supply of labourers. But when crops were successful then recruits were hard to find. Then underhand and illegal methods had to be employed in recruitment. The infrastructure of recruiting agencies set up to facilitate emigration quickly acquired a dubious reputation. Although all recruiters were required to obtain a licence from the Protector, licensed recruiters were not the only ones involved. The approach to likely candidates was first made by an arkatia who could be male or female. This person took his or her recruits to the licensed recruiter who either passed the recruits straight to the Emigration Agent or got them to the port of embarkation with the financial help of some European firm (ibid p 122). As Tinker puts it 'The arkatia was regarded as playing the most villanous part in the whole operation. Usually the arkatia worked within a local radius; he relied upon his local knowledge and local contacts. He knew who was in trouble, who had fallen out with his family, who was in disgrace, who was wild or wanton. If a big man wanted to get rid of a troublemaker, the arkatia was in contact. If the police were making things hot for anyone, he was in the know. Seldom- hardly ever- did the arkatia venture into the village to seek out his prey: this was too dangerous. The village folk would certainly beat him up if he showed his face within their walls. So he waited for his opportunity when the possible emigrant would stray outside. He would then tell a story calculated to appeal to the individual

prospect' (ibid). Many were told that the work was being offered in Calcutta. If the person had special skills he would be told that these would be needed but that he would have to declare first that he could do agricultural work because of strict government regulations.

Apart from the immediate vicinity of the villages the arkatia also frequented popular public places such as temples, markets, railway stations etc. Many women were abducted and forcibly recruited from such public places. It was recognised that certain towns such as Allahabad, Fyzabad and Agra were dangerous for people venturing out on their own.

The first proposal was made directly to the recruiter from the arkatia. If this was accepted, the arkatia handed over the new recruit to the licensed recruiter. The licensed recruiter would then take the new recruits to the sub-depot where the details of their new work would be explained to them. At this point many declined to leave but on being told that they would have to pay the bill for the cost of their journey, they were often forced to change their minds. As C.F. Andrews, a European missionary and philanthropist living in India and investigating the emigration system pointed out, there was a 'sense of helplessness, like that of an animal who has been caught in a trap and has given up the useless struggle to escape' (ibid p 130). The recruit would stay in a 'warehouse', along with other recruits until the time came for all of them to start on the journey to the port of embarkation. According to the regulations, there had to be four women to every ten men and so before the recruits were taken on another journey, this proportion had to be made up. Many of the female recruits that were taken in had been abducted or kidnapped but as recent research shows others voluntarily emigrated (Lal 1983 p 114).

The recruiter had to get his recruits passed by the local magistrate and sometimes also by the local medical inspector. The registration of recruits was sometimes brief, at other times, especially in the case of women, it was intense, often involving police enquiries. Delay could cause the recruiter to turn to sub-agents who were usually also licensed recruiters. The sub-agents supplied recruits to the Emigration Agent if there was a shortage of labourers.

The licensed recruiter took his recruits to the port town, most often Calcutta, and on arrival at the depot the labourer was ready to begin the process of becoming an indentured coolie. There were three or four separate depots in Calcutta. They were surrounded by a high wall to prevent people entering or leaving at will and contained barracks which provided sufficient accommodation for two shiploads of coolies. Here the coolies spent between one and three weeks under the jurisdiction of the manager of the depot, the Emigration Agent (Tinker op cit p 138).

The new recruits were first of all cleaned up. They were then inspected medically for 'sight and hearing but above all for their capacity to wield agricultural implements' (ibid). They were also inspected for venereal disease (excluding the married men). Women did not receive as much attention as the men because it was felt that too rigorous an inspection would scare them away and the proportion of women in the labour force would not be made up. Once the doctors had passed the men, they were ready to leave for the ship. The Protector of Emigrants was present to see them off, issuing each with a pass and an identification disk. On the emigrant ships the Surgeon Superintendent was a key figure because on him depended the health of both the labourers and the crew. Most of the doctors for the longer voyages were Europeans. Once on board the Indians were allocated a place, the single women being berthed aft, in the rear section of the ship. The married couples and children were accommodated amidships but sometimes they were separated. The single men were put in the forward part of the ship where in the later part of indenture they were allocated bunks. Usually the journey took three to four months. The Indians very quickly became aware that matters of caste and custom were to be left behind. Considering that caste had been such an entrenched part of the Indian's life for so many centuries, it is interesting it was abandoned so easily. This can be explained in terms of the lax rules of eating and washing on board the ships, and also in terms of the Indians' belief that caste restrictions could no longer apply on a sea journey. At the same time however, it is also possible that because the Indians who were emigrating were largely from the lower and middle castes instead of the higher, they had no reason to

maintain customs defining for them the rules of pollution and purity which had always benefitted those of the upper castes anyway. It was always the case even upon arrival in the new place of residence that the upper caste wished to maintain and consolidate their status. The lower castes were not so anxious to transport their subjugation.

On the ships, the emigrants were roused early and the first meal was served at about 9 a.m. Coolies were expected to amuse themselves and at least half of them were supposed to be on deck at all times of the day in the interests of good health. It was during the first few days that the labourers faced the most trauma. Many had never been on ships before, and some attempted to jump off the ship and swim back home. After weeks at sea, sometimes with the danger of sickness on board, the emigrants finally reached their destination. Once they landed they were taken immediately to a quarantine station for medical examination and clearance and then to the immigration depot. In the depot the immigrants faced the planters almost immediately. Most wanted their labourers straight away and in some places they even besieged the depot (ibid p 171) in an effort to engage the best men. Sometimes they even fought each other.

Once the immigrants had made an agreement with their 'master', they were marched away under the jurisdiction of their sirdars. (4) Upon reaching the plantation, the immigrants were introduced to a way of life that had only recently been tainted with slavery. The plantation was a world apart, and was subject to its own laws and regimented discipline. As a unit of production the plantation system had strict work codes, and an authoritarian and hierarchical social structure. This was to be the context within which the immigrants had to live and work for the next five or ten years of their lives.

3. The Sugar Plantation Context and Indentured Labour

Plantation agriculture has always been referred to in the literature as having a close association with colonization (Tinker ibid, Courtenay 1980, Beckford op cit). The plantation has been defined in more than various ways nearly all of which stress aspects such as scale of enterprise, crop specialisation and export orientation (Courtenay: ibid p 10). There is also mention of characteristics such

as metropolitan domination, centralised control of operations and concentration on tropical crops (ibid pp 10-11). In addition, attention has been paid to the special combination of industrial and agricultural activities on plantations. Most definitions are phrased taking into account the evidence that the plantation features as part of a colonial economy (ibid p 12). Plantation production straddles both capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production. It is pre-capitalist in its extensive use of land, in the low and stagnant levels of technology, in its reliance on unfree labour and in the diversion of profits to support conspicuous consumption of the aristocracy. Yet plantations can also be seen as capitalist since there is the engagement in large-scale speculative production of agricultural commodities for the world market. The capitalist relations were reinforced by emancipation of slaves and the introduction of indentured labour or apprenticeships as well as by production for a world market due to the removal of tariffs in Britain for colonial sugar and the production of European beet sugar (North-Coombs in Saunders op cit p 90). The emergence of the industrial plantation in certain pre-capitalist contexts brought about the initial accumulation of capital.

The literature on plantation economies is usually divided in terms of the notions of the 'traditional' and the 'industrial'. It is understood that the traditional plantation (also known as the 'pure' plantation) was a 'total economic institution' which left little opportunity for its workforce (which operated under various degrees of coercion) to move elsewhere. Although the industrial plantation was similar in many respects to the traditional form, it was also quite different in terms of its constitutive labour force. The traditional plantation was dependent on a slave labour force which produced a particular range of crops within the context of general inflexibility (Courtney op cit p 44). The abolition of slavery enforced certain changes which ultimately had the effect of introducing some political and economic liberalism and various technical advances. The slave plantation had been labour intensive, with no incentive for technological advancements.

Courtenay suggests that amongst the most important changes that occurred after emancipation which had effects upon the traditional plantation was the 'increasing liberalisation' of British trading policy which led to demands for tropical products (ibid p 45). In fact Britain acted as a clearing house for re-shipment to Europe. The products were becoming more cheaply available to a bigger section of the population. Furthermore, the nineteenth century industrialisation of Britain had created more wealth for investment, putting increasing amounts of money into the pockets of even the labouring classes. For example, the consumption of tea and sugar in the second half of the nineteenth century had increased greatly, largely because of the availability of these products to the working population (ibid p 46). Nineteenth century technical developments also impacted on plantations for their use created a demand for certain staples. Advances occurred in crop production and processing methods, and the markets were reached quicker because of the development of the railway, the clipper ship and the steamship (ibid p 47). The electric telegraph contributed to the establishment of world commodity markets (ibid).

Major modifications in the traditional plantations began to occur. These were economic, operational and spatial, and new patterns of economic activity emerged in the traditional areas (ibid). These undoubtedly impacted on the many new plantations that were emerging in the nineteenth century in response to the requirements of an industrial era. The new plantations remained total institutions but there was now the need to pay labour and make certain other changes in response to the wider world economy. These changes incorporated aspects such as scale of operation and choice of crop. The largest single item of cost on the plantations was wages (ibid p 55). On the Jamaica sugar plantations this represented between one-half and two-thirds of the total cost of production (ibid). In addition, recruitment costs and cost of transport were also to be paid. Where the cost of processing certain export items was high it was cheaper for the plantation to be funded through the stock market, rather than individual proprietorship. During the nineteenth century therefore company control came to take over the individual proprietor (ibid).

However, with the opening up of trade and the removal of many of the tax restrictions for products coming from the tropics, the tropical planters came into competition with products grown under all sorts of production relations, not all of them unfree. For example, the settler colonies of Canada, Australia and New Zealand also produced export crops grown by individual farming families. In addition many products were being grown by 'free' waged workers rather than indentured labourers. For the plantation owner who had no access to a suitable 'free' labour force, in order to realise a reasonable profit, a sufficiently high return on investment was necessary. This meant that more efficient use had to be made of plantation investment in capital and in labour.

On the traditional plantation, sugar was the preferred crop because it utilised the labour force during all seasons (ibid p 56). But during the off-peak season, the sugar plantation would leave much of the labour force without a lot to do. Under slave situations this could be supported somewhat, but even there the off-peak wastage began to be expensive when emancipation was imminent. On the industrial plantation however, such excessive wastage of labour could not be countenanced. Thus technical innovations were encouraged, and the possibility of diversification explored. At peak production, i.e. during planting and harvesting, reserve family members were called upon to provide the extra services, or alternatively, outside help hired. In the case of Fiji, my own evidence shows that women and suitable Fijians acted as a 'reserve army' of labour at such times. But in the interest of reducing the work of planting, the industrial planter came to rely on the production of tree crops, i.e. tea, coffee, cocoa, coconut, sisal and oil palm although highly specialised varieties of sugar cane, that is those that could be ratooned for eight or ten years, were also grown (ibid p 57). Sugar cane was also an attractive crop because recent successes in mechanisation had made it possible to extract the juice from the cane faster. However, despite improved mechanisation, the production of sugar still required a large labour force if only during planting and harvesting, and it was this that encouraged the industrial planter eventually to lease out plantations to small peasants, thus passing on the costs of production to the entire peasant family.

In terms of general characteristics, industrial plantations were larger than those that had exploited slave labour because the expense of setting up the plantation had to be recouped in terms of the volume of production. In addition, company control of plantations was mediated by the services of the managerial class. There was also a constant demand for land, and the building of roads and railway to make the isolated areas accessible to mills and production plants. In addition, processing was done on plantations. The plantation was a business concern and as such competition for investment funds had a strong influence on aspects such as the choice of crops, and organisation of plantation labour. Further investment was attracted by increasingly efficient methods of land use, and the search for better crop varieties.

Under such corporatized plantation production, the Indian labourers were viewed as mere instruments of labour who were to be treated as units of investment rather than as humans. If maximum profitability was the aim, and wage costs the biggest single expense item, then labourers were to be exploited until the required surplus had been obtained. The laws of the land, devised by colonial officers in defence of profit and property, were utilised as extra-economic coercion.

Work on the sugar plantations was the hardest of all (Tinker op cit p 178). The only way to make profits was to wring out the maximum work from the labourers and also to cut their wages (ibid). But there was more than economic exploitation at stake. In all the colonies women were particularly vulnerable to both economic and sexual exploitation. The capacity to exploit the workers also included the sexual exploitation of the women (ibid).

Upon reaching the new colony and after the period of quarantine, the coolie was bound to his or her employer through a contract. This was known as the 'agreement', although for most Indians this began to be called 'Girmit'. Since indentured labourers were under contract for only a limited number of years, they were set to work straight away. Sometimes the labourers landed in hospital after only a few weeks

because even agriculturalists had not been used to plantation regimentation. Most were able to adapt only after a year or two. Many others died from overwork, bad nutrition, or outright starvation. The period of bondage was for five years but the nature of plantation life and the abject cruelty and illtreatment experienced by workers maimed them psychologically and often physically for life.

The new arrivals on the plantations were sorted out into two groups- those who looked capable of heavy work, and those who could cope only with lighter tasks. The stronger workers joined a shovel-gang who did the digging, clearing and planting operations. This was paid on the basis of 'task work' and was the best paid. Men could also make a bonus over and above the normal rate of pay. The job of digging cane holes was allocated by task. A man was required to dig eighty or ninety holes per task in heavy soil and up to 150 in lighter soil. The weaker men and the women would join the weeding gang which cleared the growth around the cane (ibid p 182-183). Neither task nor time work (i.e. calculated on the daily rate) paid a basic wage. Failure to complete a task led to a cut in wages. Frequently, the tasks were set too high for precisely this purpose. In order to complete a task, a worker could take fifteen hours or more, but stronger workers could do it in seven. Both sets of workers were exploited- the stronger ones in terms of their output, the weaker ones in terms of wage cuts. The first labourers to arrive in Fiji on the Leonidas were expecting a wage rate of 1 shilling sterling a day but despite their prime quality even they received only ten-and-a-half pence for their efforts (ibid p 184).

From the 1830s to the early 1900s the standard wages were supposed to be 1 shilling sterling per day or 5 shillings per week. But these were peak rates rather than daily wages (ibid p 185). Planters constantly complained about the 'high' wage rates, pointing out that in India as well as Java about one-and-a-half pence was usual. On a good estate men could earn more than five shillings per day. However the custom of keeping back wages, sometimes for more than a month, was rampant (ibid p 186). Often this led the coolies to revolt, for it had been the attraction of the wage that had induced them to leave their homelands.

The cut-back in wages was also facilitated by constant stoppages caused by unfinished tasks, whereupon the coolie received only one day's pay for two days' work (ibid p 187). Sometimes rations and wages were cut for stoppages due to illness. The cuts in wages enabled the plantation owners to exploit several days' labour for only one or two days' pay. The most notorious system was the 'double-cut' which occurred in Mauritius where the coolie would not only lose his pay for work not done, but be fined as well, ending up indebted to the planter and thus forced to continue working after his indenture in order to pay off the debts. In some respects the practice in Fiji, of adding a day to the total period of indenture for every day's absence, was similar to the 'double-cut' and in 1892 over 30 percent of the arrivals had their time extended in this way. In 1896, the extensions of a third of the labourers added 38 days to their indentures (ibid p 189).

On the plantations the workers set off for work at about 4 or 5 a.m. They worked until noon and then broke for lunch which they took in their lines or in the fields. After lunch they returned to work and laboured until sundown, although factory workers often worked through the night as well. In the slack season the work was lighter but coolies were often employed in preparing new ground for cultivation or making roads and railway lines. Other work included hauling loads and ploughing.

The labourers could not leave their plantations without permission. Absence from an estate without a pass was an offence punishable by law. This law was also designed to control the workers. Within the estates criminality was defined in terms of the labour laws. Lack of diligence, failure to complete tasks, and refusal to obey orders were all punishable offences. Whipping or flogging was common as the planters saw their labourers as property, and felt free to treat them as they wished. Sometimes women were raped as a method of control, although colonial officials always accused women of lying if they complained of rape. Only 'serious' offences came to the attention of the local inspectors or magistrates, most of whom were on friendly terms with the planters anyway. The camaraderie between white men in the colonies set them apart from the workers they all conveniently

considered to be only half human. The rare complaints by the workers usually went unreported.

The conviction rate of plantation Indians was remarkable. It was understood that Fiji's record was particularly bad. In 1892 over 40 per cent of the adult population were convicted of various labour offences, the main one being unlawful absence from work (ibid p 194). About 90 percent of the workers prosecuted in Fiji were convicted (ibid). In other colonies the crime of 'vagrancy' was common.

Those coolies who were not in gaol or working were in hospital. Many had succumbed to the various diseases in Indian depots and the ships and had never recovered from their illnesses. Their living conditions exacerbated their illnesses. The barracks the Indians were forced to live in were evil, unhealthy places with little ventilation, mud floors and no space for separate kitchens. The traditional caste system with its caste of sweepers and latrine cleaners had disappeared, leaving no one to take charge of the cleaning (ibid p 197). The hospitals which catered for the disease-ridden labourers were hardly institutions of medicine. Often the sick were unattended and left to recover as best they could. Diseases of malnutrition such as diarrhoea, dysentery and beri-beri all became common as did venereal diseases. The diseases frequently spread to the wider population. Many coolies were abandoned once it became clear that they would never work again. They were left to die by the roadside. Suicides were common even though this practice was practically unheard of in India. This was often blamed on the scarcity of women which was cause for much concern among the officials. It was believed that jealousy over women, and the ability of women to take 'advantage' of their 'scarcity' value led to many of the evils on plantations. This aspect will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

With limited funds and a hard and strenuous working life, there was little the coolie could do to make his or her lot better. The plantation shops were usually owned by the company and the price of goods there often more expensive than those outside the compound. Since the labourers were expected to fund their own reproductive

needs, they quickly became indebted to the planter in another way. Their credit was deducted from their pay.

Under such circumstances many Indians drank or drugged themselves to oblivion. Rum was widely available in many of the colonies but 'ganja' or Indian Hemp was also in widespread use (ibid p 213). The first Indian Hemp was reported to have been introduced to Fiji by the labourers on the ships Berar or Poonah in 1882 and by the end of the decade smoking the drug had become a way of life on the plantations. This was accepted by plantation owners, and sometimes even encouraged to keep the labourers docile. But eventually the drug began to slow down the workers leading the colonial authorities, under pressure from the planters, to pass legislation banning its use (Annual Report of the Agent General of Immigration Fiji, 1886)

Despite the problems on plantations, many Indians managed to save money and even send it home to India. Some of these were professional gamblers but others made money through bartering the bodies of their wives and daughters, taking advantage of their relative scarcity. Others worked hard and saved, but this invariably took a long time. Money was more easily made through exploitation and appropriation of others' labour. Sirdars, for example, were able to make more money than the labourers over whom they ruled. Their wages were higher and they were able to blackmail many men and women who came under their jurisdiction. There is oral and written evidence to suggest that sirdars also made money by selling the bodies of Indian female labourers to white and black men. Other Indians also made money by growing vegetables on Sundays and selling them in the Sunday markets.

The rigid hierarchy of the plantation kept the workers apart from their employers. However, although there was a strict division of labour between the producer and the non-producer, there were various people who could be termed 'middle management' who straddled both classes, albeit in limited ways. The sirdars, for example, managed labourers on behalf of the managers. They were unpopular with the labourers and many a cruel sirdar literally 'lost his head' after an ambush. The cane knife was an ideal weapon as well as a tool. Higher status was also conferred on mill workers because of the slightly more

skilled nature of their work. Women were rarely either sirdars or mill workers, although they sometimes carried water to the mills. Domestic servants were also another occupational group. These people were usually of slightly higher caste than the labourers and often acted with a considerable amount of arrogance towards the lowly workers. Domestic valets, butlers, footmen and cooks were often men. Women could be employed as washerwomen, gardeners and cleaners in the 'big house'.

The major distinction between the labourers and the non-labourers was expressed in terms of colour. The patriarchal planter was very racist, seeing the Indian workers (including the sirdars) as 'lowborn, even criminal' (ibid p 221). Enslavement of African workers had already been defended on the grounds that blacks 'could not be induced to work voluntarily, even for high wages, because of their limited needs and their natural taste for idleness' (North-Coombes in Saunders 1984 p 81). Once racism as a relation of production became entrenched in the indenture labour system it was used to allocate people into the various strata of the labour force. Fairer Indians, seen as Aryans, were often allocated work in the household, away from the plantations, and sometimes even in the mills as semi-skilled telephone operators or clerks, whereas darker Indians were considered fit for plantation labour only. Similarly, fairer women were considered to be appropriate as mistresses of white men, while the darker women were set aside for field labour. While evidence of this is not documented explicitly in the literature, there is enough oral material collected in my own fieldwork to suggest that favouring of fairer women and men over those of darker hue occurred. This action reflected the historical need of Social-Darwinists to explain that 'certain human beings are naturally superior to others' (Plange: 1984 p 25).

In terms of protection from abuse and super-exploitation by the planters, the labourers could go to various colonial officials employed by the government to look after labourers' interests. The stipendiary magistrates for example had been introduced into the sugar colonies with special responsibilities for plantation labour. They heard cases in their courts with the help of an interpreter and dispensed justice. Very few planters or their managers were ever

prosecuted. However large numbers of coolies were invariably sent to prison, fined, or had their indentures extended for breach of the labour laws. In the final analysis many Indians took matters into their own hands and whipped cruel task masters themselves, often disguising their faces and voices to escape identification. Many others openly revolted however, but their punishment was harsh. Those charged with murdering company officials, no matter how justified this appeared to be, were tried in a court and executed.

From the beginning, the system of indenture was based on unfreedom. The initial discussions about this new method of labour exploitation was tinged with the knowledge that slavery had to be replaced by another system of bondage so that maximum profit could ensue. This could have been provided by the former slaves but for two problems: first, the former slaves refused to indenture for the low rates of pay offered and second, out of racial prejudice, the planters refused to pay their former slaves better wages. But surplus had to be extracted from the labourers, in order that primitive accumulation could take place in colonies where capitalist penetration had already occurred. Although slavery was outlawed in legislation, the system of indenture could not help but be influenced by the history of unfreedom of the former slaves. The products that were grown under indenture were the same products that had been grown by slaves. The plantations were the same, and so were the bosses. The limited term of contract merely meant a greater degree of exploitation of the labourers. For the planters the value of Indian indentured labour lay in their place as a 'core' group of workers. Indentured labour effectively controlled the market price for labour (Ramesar in Saunders op cit p 73).

In general terms, there was little difference between the contractual obligations of men and of women. As workers they had to deal with the same contracts and the same harsh environment. They were also entitled to receive wages which were in line with the work they did. The plantation division of labour allocated different pay rates for different work, but women could be paid the same rate as men if they did men's work. However, the indenture of women differed in some significant ways from the indenture of men. Unfortunately, in the primary documents, the situation of women separate from men is

discussed only in passing and with specific reference to either their scarcity value, or their inability to undertake hard plantation work. As is shown below, Indian women were rarely wanted by planters in the indentured labour force. They were acceptable only because without the regulatory proportion of women, indenture could very easily be disallowed by the authorities. Under such circumstances some use could be made of women. This is examined next.

4. Indian Women under Indenture

Indian women's participation in plantation production has a long history. In India itself women were labourers on tea plantations, plucking the leaves of the tea tree all year round. The idea of a docile, family-bound Indian woman at work only in the domestic arena is a myth. As was shown in chapter 2 Indian women's (re)productory capacities in India has always generated wealth for the family and the community. In this section I outline 1) the recruitment policies regarding women, and 2) the actual labour of women on plantations which took into account and exploited their (re) productory capacities

(i) The recruitment of Indian women for plantation labour.

At the time when the indenture labour system was being discussed as an alternative to slavery, only suitably qualified women were seen as being able to provide the kind of labour needed for plantation agriculture. As early as 1836, when the first arrangements were being made to transport Indians to certain estates in Demerara, the proprietor of one estate, John Gladstone, asked that if 'hill women were prepared to undertake field-work they might form forty or fifty per cent of the total, but if not, then one female to nine or ten males "for cooking and washing is enough" ' (Tinker op cit p 63). It was recognised that hill women were good workers, but their numbers in the plantation labour force were contingent upon their ability to provide two kinds of services- 1) actual labouring services as producers, and 2) labouring services as reproducers, i.e. as cooks and housekeepers for the men. As workers producing the export product a significantly larger number of women could be accepted. However cooking and washing could be done for all the men by only one or two

women working full time. There was no mention of the possibility of women having children.

In all the years of indenture, there were many discussions about the suitable number of women that could be allowed for in the labour force. In the early years, when contracts were only for a year or so, there was little encouragement for male labourers to take their wives and families with them. It was believed that women accompanying their men would only hinder their work and, furthermore, that women would have to be maintained in the home while the husband went to work. There was certainly no widespread expectation in these early years that all women would be suitable as workers in their own right, although individual planters such as Gladstone recognised the utility of hill women. Although there had been women workers in India for centuries, the white men in the colonies had stereotypical views about what women in general could actually achieve. This was exacerbated by the evidence from Mauritius that when apprenticeships had prematurely ended in March 1839, 13,000 former women slaves withdrew immediately from employment (North-Coombs in Saunders op cit p 81). But the first objections to indenture, fuelled by the activities of the Anti-slavery society, contained an opinion about the small number of women among the migrants. The agitations of the Anti-Slavery Society led to a decision by the Government of India, upon the resumption of emigration to the Carribean in 1844, that at least 12-and-a-half per cent of the emigrants be female (Reddock 1984 p 4-5).

But the planters' desire for longer contracts could only be fulfilled if women were permitted to leave with their husbands, providing them with the nurture and care they would otherwise have to provide for themselves, thus straining the planters' resources. It was believed by the colonial officials that men would not settle unless they were able to have their families with them (ibid p 88). Thus they believed that the only way to satisfy the planter's insatiable demands for longer contracts was to recommend either family emigration, which was unpopular, or a greater number of single women. The planters very quickly recognised the strength of this argument and opted for single women. Single women could not only labour in their own right, they

could also service and nurture the men with whom they established sexual/emotional relations.

In the early migration to Mauritius the proportion of women was insignificant but after 1842 a number of men who had completed their term of industrial service and had gone back to India, returned to the island with their wives and families. By 1844, the proportion of women in the emigrating labour force had reached 17 per cent, although there is little evidence to indicate whether these accompanied their husbands or went on their own. It is most likely that the first women who went to Mauritius were either married to the men they were with or had formed associations with them at the port of embarkation. Although the officials at Mauritius attempted to recognise the marriages of Indians in terms of European and Christian marital legislation, it was not necessarily the case that Indians themselves took their marriage relation seriously. Many who went to Mauritius from India with their wives and families returned home alone.

In 1853, Mauritius officials abolished free return passages back to India and although this led to an increase in the official quota of women to 25 per cent, this was not strictly followed due to the lack of regulations outlining the proportion of women emigrants in the overall labour force (Tinker op cit p 88). The evidence detailed by Tinker suggests that the initiative in putting pressure on the colonies to increase the proportion of female immigrants came from the Colonial Office in 1855 when Lord John Russell in a despatch to Mauritius and the West Indies threatened to stop Indian emigration unless a 'due proportion' of women was recruited. For Russell, the 'due proportion' was around 80 per cent or more, similar to the British emigration to the United States, Canada and Australia between 1843-54. Russell urged that this proportion was also desirable in the Indian emigration, and that the lowest figure acceptable in 1856 would be one female to three males, i.e. a quota of 25 per cent. Unless this was achieved the British Government would consider ending emigration (ibid p 89). In the following year, the new Secretary for the Colonies, Henry Labouchere sent out a circular despatch to the Governor of Demerara. He requested that during the 1856-57 season women must form 25 per cent of the total, and in the following years,

the males must not exceed three times the number of females despatched in 1856-57. The object was to ensure that if the colonies wished to increase the total number of recruits, they would have to allow for an increase in the number of women (ibid). These directives of both Secretaries of State were highly unpopular with the Indian emigration officials as well as colonial officials who had to deal with planter dissatisfaction.

The directives of the Secretaries for the Colonies regarding the proportion of women, and the protests of officials in India as well as the recipient colonies, can be examined in terms of the tensions existing between different officials administering the movement of labour internationally. During the years 1854 to 1925 the relationship of Britain with all her overseas possessions (except India) was dealt with by the Office of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. During this period the Office was responsible for increasingly complex matters regarding the colonies because of aspects such as the 'scramble' for Africa, the French wars and the emergence of the larger of the old colonies into fully self-governing nation states (Jeffries 1956 p 25). Under such significant circumstances the officials in the Secretariate considered themselves to be very important, although they were not in the immediate vicinity of the colonies they administered. This had the consequence of generating resentment among the more lowly colonial officials who, at grassroots level, had to deal with the day to day management of the colonies. But the officials in India saw themselves as relatively isolated from and independent of the Secretariate and resented it when London officials made rules and regulations which they thought were formulated out of ignorance of local conditions and of the status of India as different from all the other smaller colonies.

The London directive about the proportion of women in the labour force brought protests from Caird, Emigration Agent in Calcutta, who objected that he had difficulty in procuring the minimum proportion of women. Apparently it was more difficult to recruit the minimum number of women from north India than the south. This may have been because southern Indian women had more of a tradition of migration than those from the north. Caird supplied the information that in the 1858

emigration to Mauritius, women formed 34 per cent of those shipped from Calcutta, they were 48 per cent of the Madras emigrants and 41 per cent of those from Bombay. The female quota for Mauritius was raised to 40 per cent in 1860 (Tinker op cit). But most of the officials erred in calculating the percentage of women. There was a confusion between percentage and proportion. Most of the officials were calculating a requirement to provide forty women for every one hundred men, i.e. 28 per cent of the total. The Emigration Agent in Bombay, J.D. Freeman protested to the Bombay Government in 1860, arguing that the instructions to raise the number of women to 50 per cent of the men was different from the 34 per cent that was being asked for at Calcutta (ibid). In 1861 males formed almost three quarters of the Indian population. It was revealed that in the West Indies the proportion was even lower (ibid p 90).

The directive to increase the number of women was unpopular among the local agents who faced much opposition from the Indians themselves. The licensed recruiters had to resort to illegal methods in order to procure the required number of females. Ships which had not made up their contingent of women could not leave and the owners protested at their loss of money. Planters in the colonies wanted male workers for the cane plantations. Nevertheless, the Colonial Office insisted on maintaining the proportion and the Secretary of State for India issued instructions on 30 July 1868 that a proportion of 40 women to 100 men (ie 28 per cent) was to be standard practice for the rest of indenture (ibid), although the rule was to be initially applied for only one year (Lal 1983 p 101). Proportionately larger numbers of women were emigrating to the smaller West Indian and French colonies because by the time these colonies were beginning to import Indian labour, the rule regarding minimum proportion of women was already in force (ibid p 102).

There were obvious difficulties in recruiting women from the districts, nevertheless the quota was invariably met most of the time. Frequently the proportion exceeded the required number (Lal 1983 Table 2 p 102). In 1879 the proportion of women to men was 53.5 (to Fiji), the highest ever. But the overall lower proportion of women compared to men in the labour force was affected by several features: 1) the

lower ratio of men to women in India in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Reddock op cit p 7), 2) the high proportion of married women in India from the age of 10 (Crooke 1877 in Lal 1983 p 103) which restricted their movement, and 3) the understanding already reached that the colonies wanted more male workers and fewer women.

Despite the difficulties however, many women did emigrate. The evidence from two of the colonies (Fiji and Trinidad) shows that the women who emigrated defined themselves as either 'single' or 'widows' (ibid p 103 and Reddock op cit p 11). This is often considered to be 'surprising' because in India women of marriageable age did not travel on their own (Lal ibid p 104). However, in terms of the social and economic conditions in India at the time it should not be surprising to learn that many past traditional practices were in disarray, and that women did have more freedom to travel to find work. As already stated already many would have been engaged on tea and coffee plantations within India itself. While the single women might have formed liaisons with men on the way to the colonies, the married women tended to stay with their husbands. This is not to say that they remained with their husbands upon reaching the colonies however. The evidence shows that many 'married' women left their husbands on arrival in the colonies. Brahmin widows formed a large proportion of those that went to Trinidad. They were probably escaping suttee, or a harsh life as a widow in India (Reddock op cit p 12).

The women came from all different caste backgrounds. Recent research on the social and economic origins of Fiji Indians shows that of all the women who came to Fiji, about 48 per cent were of higher or middling castes (Lal op cit p 104). But the biggest proportion of women as a group came from middling and low castes (31.4 per cent and 29.1 per cent respectively). This indicates that these women were of the agricultural and labouring castes, used to heavy, backbreaking work. Writing of British Guiana, David Dodd pointed out '...many of the women who did come to the colony tended to be already more independent and self-seeking than those whose fathers, husbands and brothers decided that they should not go...' (Dodd: 1976 cited in Reddock op cit p 12). In Trinidad over two thirds came as widows, the remainder as deserted wives and prostitutes (ibid). Some also came

after they had lost their families as a consequence of famine or disease (Tinker op cit p 266-7). The common picture of docile Indian women married by age 10 and restricted from travelling outside their homes was not necessarily accurate. As Reddock points out, 'the social reality of life in India did not always conform to the ideology of 'conservatism' which was and is often propounded. The fact is that many women were 'deserted' or abandoned or had children outside of marriage. It is possible that the government of India saw this as an opportunity to rid itself of some of its aberrations' (Reddock op cit p 13). She argues that the women that were wanted on the plantations were those who could facilitate a certain degree of 'stability' in estate life, who could accept a subordinate position and also work diligently in the fields (ibid p 14). In an 1851 letter to Earl Grey, the Secretary for the Colonies, Trinidad immigration official Harris stated that 'If a cargo entirely of women could be sent over, I have little doubt that the greater number of the Coolies would remain here permanently' (ibid p 15). This comment illustrates that planters needed some women to keep experienced workers in the country and available for work on the estates (ibid).

In 1893, in order to encourage more women to emigrate from India it was suggested by Surgeon-Major Comins, Protector at Calcutta, that women should only be indentured for two years. He assured the planters that after their two year indentureship period the women would not be allowed to 'sit idle' by their husbands if good wages were available. Thus the Protector was 'pandering to the prevailing ideology within the Trinidad and Indian ruling classes which accepted the definition of women as 'housewives' and of seclusion as a sign of high caste status' (ibid p 16). By the twentieth century when more women were demanded to keep the men happy as well as work in the fields, higher rates of commission were paid for women than for men. At the same time questions were being raised by colonial officials about the type of women recruited. Many were considered to be 'undesirable' because they were prostitutes or women seeking to escape their husbands and families (ibid pp 17-18). By 1916 family emigration was being sought and bonuses were recommended for men to encourage 'the taking out of female children by married persons' (ibid p 18).

The women who emigrated to Fiji emigrated from small urban centres, mainly from their districts of origin (Lal 1983 p 108). In the case of Fiji there were few widows registered, although perhaps all this serves to indicate is that women may not have revealed their true status to the emigration officials, perhaps fearing that they would be sent back to finish their 'sentences'. Many women falsified details about their place of residence, obviously wanting to leave for the colonies anonymously (ibid p 111). Others may have had no wish to advise their relatives of their whereabouts.

The two main reasons why women were recruited as part of the labour force were: 1) the need to stabilise the male labour force (Reddock op cit and North-Coombs in Saunders 1984 pp 97-98), and 2) to need to reproduce the labour force locally, thus raising problems for recruitment of the right type of women (Reddock ibid p 8). In my opinion, women were also recruited as 'workers', thus there was the need to introduce the agricultural woman, i.e. one who could relate to the men in cultural and religious terms, and also one who could labour in the fields. But different colonies had different effects on women's employment. In some, like Fiji, women were engaged from the beginning to work on plantations, whereas in Mauritius, women's plantation production did not become significant until the inter-war years of the twentieth century.

(ii) Indian women and plantation production

On the plantations there was a strict division of labour which incorporated a sexual and racial dimension. White men were at the top of the hierarchy. Managerial and skilled tasks were reserved for white overseers, managers and technicians from Europe or from other colonies. On the sugar plantations Indian men did heavy fieldwork and also worked in the mills. Women did the weeding. During the production season, work continued up to 14 to 15 hours a day, and all indentured labourers, men, women and children were involved. Most work was allocated according to 'tasks', and certain tasks on some islands paid less than other tasks. The 1875 Ordinance of Trinidad specified five tasks a week to an immigrant. For example, on the Woodbrook Estate, weeding paid 25 cents per task, whereas fuel carriers received 30 cents per day (1 task) (ibid p 21). Drivers received 35 cents per day

(1 task), but labourers forking and burying trash received 40 cents for 4,000 feet (ibid). Surgeon-Major D.W. Comins noted in his diary that 'women, boys and weakly men are given permanantly some sum less than 25 cents per task because it has been decided that they are unable to do a full task....' (Comins, 1893 cited in ibid p 22, Reddock's emphasis). A 1915 report to the Government of India on the conditions of indenture by James McNeill and Chimman Lal stated that women normally earned 'one half to two thirds the wages of male immigrants' (McNeill and Lal cited in ibid p 22). Even in periods of high production and high profits, for example at Palmiste Estate in 1891, men received 50-70 cents for a task but women received a flat rate of 25 cents a day on task work (Comins ibid p 36 cited in Reddock ibid). In addition to payment of low wages, Comins also found on some estates the practice of carrying forward 'an ever accumulating debt' for rations supplied to women during pregnancy. This resulted in them earning no wages for months or years (Comins p 15 cited in Reddock ibid).

But the best women workers could earn as much as men. Some women who were not burdened by children or ill-health, and had come from agricultural stock in India could not only earn enough money, but also save certain amounts which they later invested in stores or jewellery. But the wage differential between women and men in most instances led to women being dependent on men, although the agreement that had been entered into in India stipulated that all full time workers (adults over 10 years old) should be paid the same with no differentials between weaker men, women, boys or girls (Comins p 9 in Reddock ibid). Plantation statistics were often inadequate but some records show that women appeared to work fewer days than men, and also therefore received less wages than men.

On the plantations women were faced with several constraints. First of all there was the sexual disproportion which shaped the life of the coolie lines. The immigration of higher numbers of men rather than women, and the low birth-rate on plantations ensured that this disproportion was maintained for some length of time. Men competed with each other for scarce females in a situation where the deprivation of a wife for servicing and maintaining the household had

a harsh effect on morale. Without the traditional comfort and sustenance provided by a wife, most Indian men found it difficult to cater for themselves. Furthermore, the absence of a wife denied an Indian man the status of a 'married man' which had been important for personal prestige and wealth accumulation in India. The few women who were available were therefore courted with money and jewellery as well as affection. Those who resisted male attention could be raped or abducted although this was rarely reported.

Secondly women were constrained by their wage rates. As workers they received less wages than men because of the division of labour that existed on plantations. Weeding and clearing the ground in preparation for planting paid less than the tasks men were involved in. Women's pay was similar to that received by 'weak' men and the children. Because women received less wages but had to pay the same costs of food as men, they were forced into a situation of economic dependency on men. Thus even if women felt disinclined, they had to form sexual/financial associations with men. This was a more viable economic proposition than forming associations with women for all women were in the same position regarding pay levels. Furthermore, women liked men, and lust and love were as much reasons for these associations as survival. The problem was that many women liked more than one man and this led to many incidences of jealousy and anti-women violence among the men.

Thirdly, women were constrained by racial signification. As coloured women they were more vulnerable than coloured men because white men saw in them an aptitude for exotic sensuality. An Australian overseer in Fiji, Walter Gill expressed his attraction for Indian women in this way: 'The Hindu was different. Tantalizingly beautiful, she was as brittle as crystal with some men, and virgin-kind to others....

'Small and dainty, she was a "Satsuma" in a silk sari, and as joyously amoral as a doe rabbit. She took her lovers as a ship takes rough seas; surging up to the one who would smother her, then tossing him aside, thirsting for the next. In the strong cruel light of the tropics, the elfin promise of her said: "Stop me and buy one."... I thought she selected her Europeans like a girl takes a chocolate from a box. First a look over

what offers, then finger one daintily, before consuming it voluptuously, savouring it to the last morsel. Invariably she made the first approach, and she was never known to fail' (Gill: 1970 pp 73-74).

All women were constricted by this image of them as sensual erotic creatures who were unrestrained in their sexuality. Gill also reported on the numbers of women who made money out of sexual servicing of European managers and overseers. These men sometimes fell in love with them thereby destroying their careers with their companies. To rape or be sexually involved with an Indian woman was one thing, but to fall in love and want to be married was another. Most men who got into this situation had to be sent back to their own countries in disgrace.

Fourthly, Indian women were constrained by Indian men's image of the place of women. Although women were in demand, it was not women who could decide their own fate. Older women had some control over their own lives but young girls, dependent as they were on their parents, could be sold or bartered to men. The parents reversed the usual custom of dowry and instead demanded a bride-price. Of the Indians of Trinidad, Charles Kingsley wrote: 'The girls are practically sold by their fathers while yet children' (Tinker op cit p 203). Some female children were sold several times by their fathers and mothers, the profits thus accruing serving as the basis upon which some Indian men's wealth was built.

Marriage laws were most unsatisfactory in the colonies. The law recognised Christian marriage as the norm, and traditional marriage rituals had no validity, although registration of a couple as husband and wife was acceptable as long as this was done before the Protector of Emigrants or a magistrate. But as Tinker points out, this was beyond the means of most coolies (ibid p 202). Thus a poor man's wife could be taken away from him by another man offering more status symbols such as money, jewellery and absence of housework or plantation work. In 1862 the Acting Protector of Mauritius wrote of the practice of sirdars and overseers returning to the colony with several 'wives' who were then sold or transferred to other men. 'At that time a bounty of two pounds sterling was paid to all who brought "legitimate" wives with them, so that by this "illicit practice" the

returnees made a profit. The recommendation was that the bounty be suspended on this account (ibid p 203). In all the colonies, despite traditional practices that some Indians had of being permitted more than one wife, only one wife was legally allowed. This did not prevent Indians from exchanging the women, however. The British Guiana Commission of 1871 reported on numerous cases where women had been exchanged, or had changed husbands, or had been torn away from their real husbands. There was often much confusion about who in actuality were the husbands of some women. For example the Royal Commission told of the case of Nabhe Baksh who arrived with his wife Astoreah. She left him for Maighoo, then returned to her original husband, but when Maighoo threatened to kill her real husband, the magistrate treated the real husband as the seducer (ibid p 205).

Since marriages were seen to be irregular, the children were considered to be illegitimate by Indians who lived off the estates and by colonial officials. There was a low birth rate on all plantations but this was not unusual for low fertility was the norm among slave and other immigrant women elsewhere (Shlomowitz 1987). However there was a high mortality rate among the children of indentured Indians. Most babies who died in the first year of birth died of diseases caused by malnutrition and debility of mothers. Many also died of congenital syphilis. Although a coolie woman got leave for her confinement, she had to return to work shortly after the birth of the baby. Often she had to take the child to work. Many women killed their infants at birth, or aborted their pregnancies in an effort to control their fertility.

In the final years of indenture, it was the alleged prostitution of women and the 'slavery' of men that gripped the attention of the abolitionists in India. McNeill and Chimman Lal's report had stated that the recruitment of females had been unsatisfactory, and although there was no widespread prostitution of women, the immorality on the estates compared very unfavourably with that of the Indian village. Although general public opinion in India was still, by 1915, only partly aroused, several organisations were being formed to fight Indian emigration. Among them were the Indian Coolie Protection Society and the Anti-Indentured Emigration League of Bengal (Tinker

ibid p 335). The members considered the indenture system morally evil because of the large number of suicides and murders, and the demoralizing effect of gross disparities in the numbers of the sexes (ibid p 337). Eventually in the second decade of the twentieth century the indenture system became the centre of Indian nationalistic politics. In a despatch to Whitehall, the Governor-General of India, bowing to local Indian as well as European philanthropist opinion, urged His Majesty's Government totally to abolish indenture. The despatch suggested that the allegations of moral degradation of women were true, particularly in Fiji, and then it condemned the use of criminal prosecution as a means of enforcing obedience. It also challenged the belief that the indentured coolies made money in the colonies because fully one third of them returned home destitute. Furthermore, Indians could now find work in local Indian industry. As Hardinge, the new Viceroy of India stated in a despatch to Whitehall, 'The moment has now arrived to urge His Majesty's Government to assent to the total abolition of the system..and thus to remove a moral stigma which is deeply resented by educated public opinion in India and exposes to hostile criticisms the Government of India and His Majesty's Government in the sanctions which they lend to a system entailing much unhappiness and moral degradation' (ibid p 341). It was obvious that since the system of indenture was beginning to threaten the very foundations of British colonial rule in India, it was time for it to end. The despatch closed by commenting that it was by abolition that India would contribute to "Imperial progress and unity" rather than by 'blind compliance with demands for the continuance of an evil system' (ibid p 341). During the war years, the shipment of coolies to the colonies was suspended for lack of ships, and was never re-established after the war was over.

Summary

In this chapter I advanced the argument that while indentured servitude was designed mostly for male emigrants, it was soon made clear that women's recruitment and plantation conditions were to become a major feature of the discussions regarding the ongoing success or failure of the new plantation relations of production. In the planters' mind, all women were not as suitable as men for hard work in the sugar fields. They would have preferred a labour

contingent of single men unless women had already proved themselves as field workers in their place of origin. But the strange mixture of women who often landed in the colonies, either singly or accompanied by men, led planters to believe that men were better than women in plantation work. Even 'unsuitable' men could be trained to work in the sugar cane fields and the mills. Unsuitable women were often troublesome, particularly if there were many men vying for their attention. But women could be acceptable if they could be made to work, as well as service the men. Thus the planters' views about the utility of women were formulated in terms of women's ability to be (re)producers: on the one hand women could labour in the fields, and on the other hand they had the customary ability to make a 'home' for men. From the planters' point of view, women's labour in both areas could enhance profitability. Women earned less because they stayed away more but their work for men enabled the planters to sidestep their responsibility in maintaining their own labour force. This presented a savings in terms of planters' investment and running costs. In the later years of indenture women were even tacitly encouraged, through improved health and nutrition, to bear and rear children. Although the birth rate on plantations at all times remained low, the mortality rate improved, thus indicating to the planters that a future 'free' labour force would be available for the industry.

The women themselves were caught in the middle of a number of contradictions. Some had accompanied their men to the plantations, but most were single. Thus these women were engaged in their own right and expected to command a wage for their labour. However, the plantation division of labour specified certain jobs for women, weaker men and children. Women, as a group, were allocated a certain place in the labour force. Women's poor wages as a consequence of this forced them to consider associations with men who could also attract them with promises of a better life. But competition between men for women's services and affection led to women attaining a form of independence. This was expressed in the way women 'changed their husbands', disregarding the customary laws of faithfulness to husband for life. Their position in India as an exploited and oppressed class had suppressed their aspirations for autonomy for too long. Given the chance, women claimed their long overdue freedom from men. The

violence against women on the part of men was a reaction to their conscious claim to autonomy.

But women were still constrained by their plantation context. While they might have been successful in manipulating Indian men to their advantage, it was less easy to withstand European men who were the bosses. Nevertheless women attempted to do this. They refused to be compulsorily allocated to Indian men, they took time off work under the excuse of pregnancy and nursing, and they used their sexuality to attain certain material advantages. European men complained endlessly about the low work participation of Indian women, disregarding the fact that women could not necessarily maintain themselves with the low wages they were given. Many women would have gone into prostitution as an alternative method of earning money or of supplementing their income. Within the framework of the plantation, this would have been a relatively easy way of earning money, considering how desperate Indian men were for women's affections and services.

Despite women's relative autonomy, money was made out of women's work. Planters exploited women's labour for reproduction of the labour force in terms of its daily maintenance. Without women's labour as nurturers and servicers of men, the planters could very easily have had an unstable and angry labour force which would refuse to re-engage after their term of servitude was over. Furthermore, the colonial officials in India would not have permitted the system to continue had not a certain proportion of women been paid for by the planters. Planters also employed women in plantation work, thus appropriating their surplus labour in the fields. In terms of primitive accumulation, women's services were vital, for without women, there would not have been a labour force from India, and there would not have been the availability of the cheapest method of reproduction of the labouring people in the colonies.

Indian men benefitted too. Those in positions of power could themselves allocate women to other men for a fee. Many husbands sold their wives and female children, sometimes many times over. The 'bride-price' gained in this way went into their personal funds. Many a small fortune was built by this method. Indian men took advantage of

women's ability to nurture and care, and through a mixture of physical violence, financial incentive, and women's own desire for safety and security, they were able to manipulate women potential for (re)production. Women did not easily submit to their exploitation. They attempted to resist and fight to maintain their relative autonomy, which was usually, in the final instance taken away from them. In these acts of resistance women had to use different strategies which sometimes involved their active complicity with men in the bartering of their own female children.

CHAPTER 5 CASE STUDY- INDENTURED INDIAN WOMEN IN FIJI- WORK, WAGES AND EXPLOITATION.

In the previous chapter I argued that indentured Indian women's labour in the fields and at home served as the basis of male stability and profit because of its centrality in (re)production in the colonial sugar industry. My argument was that women's (re)productory capacities were crucial to primitive accumulation in the sugar colonies because without a certain proportion of women as part of the overall labour force, indenture as a system of recruitment and contractual servitude of Indian labourers would have been disallowed by colonial authorities in spite of planter pressure. Without indentured labour, most colonies would have become ridden with financial crises as happened in Jamaica and the smaller sugar islands of the West Indies. As paid and unpaid workers on the plantations, women provided their labour during and outside working hours.

This chapter and chapter 6 serve as two sides of the same coin. In these chapters I examine the indentured servitude of Indian women in Fiji. I argue that within the context of the transition to capitalism as a consequence of the establishment of the industrial sugar plantations of the Colonial Sugar Refining Co of Australia, women provided surplus labour for (re)production of capital and labour. I argue here that as unfree labourers within the plantation labour context women produced a surplus as a reserve army of labour. Following from this, in Chapter 6 I argue that as unfree women within the context of plantation patriarchy they maintained and serviced the labour force daily. The unfree nature of women's work as plantation workers and domestic maintainers indicates that their labour power was not commodified, and that the payment of 'wages' for part of this work shows that capitalist transition was not yet complete. This chapter also shows that the ability of the Australian industrialists to make sugar the main income earner of Fiji was premised upon the understanding that the surplus had to be accumulated through the exploitation of unfree labour. Women provided a greater range of unfree labour and it can be argued that sugar became Fiji's main industry with the exploitation of the (re)productory capacities of

women. Yet, despite their centrality in production, women were deliberately set up to fail at paid work. Women were nudged into domestic activities which interfered with their ability to demand paid work. Thus, as plantation producers, they became a floating and surplus pool of employable labour.

Indian women who indentured for a period of contractual servitude in Fiji from 1879 onwards had little idea of how significant their presence in this tiny British Colony in the Pacific would be. When they set sail from Calcutta or Madras there was probably nothing in their minds other than sadness and pain. It would have been impossible for them to visualise how long it would take them to travel, or how grotesquely different their lives would now be. The journey would have been interminably long, and their hands and bodies would have been itching to touch land, the basis of their livelihood, once more.

They did touch land again, but it was all so different. Work was no longer leisurely and relatively painless. The land was different too. It was now an enemy, dug up with a vengeance, raped and polluted by hatred, anger and fire. There was nothing in it for them. Yet, at the same time, they liked it. There was freedom of a sort, and energy. There were other women, and more men than they knew what to do with. Fiji (Phijee) was a frontier society with all its extremes; the tension between the protagonists affected everyone, man, woman and child.

The newly arrived Indian women learnt the rules quickly. They were allocated to a plantation, usually belonging to the CSR Co, given their tools, their rations of a few ounces of dhal, rice and vegetables and their cooking utensils, and then taken to their shared rooms in the lines and left to sleep off the journey. A few hours later they were woken by the sound of a bell, a cracking whip, and the voice of the sirdar....'Jaago, Jaago, Jaago...' They had to cook their food ready for the day, pack their lunches and get ready for field work. At the 'Parade' ground where everyone assembled in preparation for the day's work, they were allocated their 'gangs', and their 'sirdar'. So began their Fijian sojourn which at all times was centred on labour. It was as labourers that women were recruited, and as

labourers they were employed under contractual obligation for a number of years. As women labourers alongside men, they planted, weeded and harvested the sugar cane, Fiji's biggest money earner ever. Unlike male labourers however, women got less money, and eventually less work. But for three to five years, women's labour and women's product helped to create profits for a few Australians and an income for the Colony.

The exploitation of Indian women workers on Fiji's plantations did not end until 1920 when all indentures were cancelled and most plantations divided up. Until then however, Indian women's surplus labour was appropriated through 1) the deliberate formulation of the 40 women to 100 men proportion at the recruitment stage which made possible the allocation of a certain number of women to a certain number of men; and 2) the request of planters that agricultural women only were to be recruited indicating that women were to work as labourers on the plantations.

1. Recruitment and transport of women indentured labourers to Fiji.

Altogether 13,696 women out of a total labouring population of 60,965 Indians were transported to Fiji between 1879 and 1916 (Gillion 1962 and Lal 1983 and 1985a). Overall there were 43.5 females to every 100 males, i.e. a percentage of about 30.30. In terms of adult females only, which before 1900 meant those over 10 years of age, the proportion was 41 (Lal *ibid* 1983 p 102), i.e. 29 percent. Most of the women were young, i.e. between 11 and 26 years of age (*ibid* p 103 Table 3). The youthfulness of the female population was matched by that of the male- most men in the labouring force were between the ages of 19 and 39. Young men and women were more acceptable to planters because they had the ability to do hard work (*ibid*).

About 64 per cent of the women defined themselves as 'single' i.e. they travelled to Fiji on their own, unaccompanied by husbands and/or children. The rest went either as 'married' women or as single mothers accompanied by their children (*ibid* p 104). Apart from these women, there were another 130 (in total) who defined themselves as married and gave the name of their husbands as next of kin but travelled alone

(ibid). Most men, i.e. 86.8 per cent of them, also travelled to Fiji as single men (ibid).

In terms of occupational background, the officials handling emigration to Fiji complied with planters' requests. The women they recruited were of the middle and low castes, i.e.

those who had a tradition of work outside the home, usually in agriculture or industry. Of all the females who came to Fiji, 4.1 percent were Brahmins, 9.0 per-cent Kshattriyas, 3.0 percent Banias, 0.3 per cent Kayasths, 31.4 percent middling castes, 29.1 per cent low castes, 2.8 percent tribals and 16.8 percent Muslims. Although the caste information at hand does not tell us at first glance what the occupational (caste/class) background of the emigrants were, this can be described as follows with reference to the entire emigration to all the colonies from Calcutta within the middling castes (i.e. the majority of the emigrants) originating in Bihar and the United Provinces, the people were Ahirs (herdsmen and cultivators); Chamars (leatherworkers); Kahars (servants); Koris (weavers); Kumhars (potters), Kurmis (cultivators); Lodhas (cultivators); Thakurs and Rajputs (landowners). From the western United Provinces and Punjab came Jats (cultivators); and Rajputs(landowners). From the Central Provinces came Chamars(leatherworkers); Gonds (tribal people); Kols (tribals); Ryots (cultivators) and Tellis (oil pressers). The most numerous among the north Indians were Ahirs, Chamars, Jats and Thakurs, ie those who had been involved in agriculture and husbandry (Gillion op cit p 53). Among the South Indians also, agricultural castes were mostly represented.

Although the Emigration Agencies preferred the agricultural castes they were not always successful in recruiting individuals from these castes. This was particularly so in the recruitment of women. It was always difficult to make up the numbers of women required by law and since the proper proportion of women had to be made up for each boatload, many non-agricultural women ended up in the colonies. Despite these difficulties however, in most years of indenture, the women arriving in Fiji were representatives of agricultural castes and were relatively more mobile than the secluded women of the higher castes. Of the total number of females emigrating to Fiji, Chamar

women comprised the biggest proportion, i.e. 16 per cent (Lal 1983 p 107). There is no actual occupational background of the Muslims recruited, probably because religion and caste were defined as markers separately from occupation, but there is no doubt that most of the Muslims recruited were also from an agricultural background. Most of the women who were recruited signed up in small local urban centres, the largest percentage being recruited in Fyzabad (14.1 percent). But a feature of female emigration was that most women signed up outside their districts of origin (ibid p 108). In Sultanpur and Azamgarh the overwhelming majority had already left their homes before being recruited for Fiji (ibid). However, compared to male emigrants, more women were recruited in their districts of origin than men (ibid). Within this category, it was more usual for women of lower castes to be registered in their districts of origin than those of the higher caste (ibid), supporting the view that women of higher castes were usually more secluded in their home environment and either had to run away to be recruited or were abducted. The women of all castes who registered outside their districts of origin were more likely to define themselves as 'single' (ibid). The evidence suggests that married women were not lured away from their homes; to the contrary, if the authorities realised that women had falsified their residence, registration was either declined or suspended (ibid p 111). Similarly, unlike Trinidad, widows were not among the indentured labourers to Fiji in any significant numbers (ibid). However this may simply have meant that widows registered as 'single' women rather than as widows.

The proportion of 40 women to 100 men applied in the case of all the colonies. It has been maintained in the literature that this proportion was suitable in order to encourage the building of a 'stable family life' (Gillion op cit p 16). It is impossible to see how this number of women in the labour force would have encouraged the formation of 'family' life. To the contrary, the proportion of women recruited had the effect of discouraging the formation of family life. The planters were not keen on having women on their plantations unless they actually 'worked'. It was understood that family emigration was not profitable, and that single rather than married workers were appropriate for plantation production. Single emigrants could be worked harder because they would be forced to provide for themselves

rather than being dependent on family members for survival. As former peasants, Indians were used to maintaining their reproductory needs through the production of consumption goods in the household. Indenture was designed to break the hold of family production, and instead force the labourer to provide for his or her needs through the contracting out of their labour power to the industrial planter. For this reason an increase in the proportion of women would interfere with the making of profit. To this end, planters attempted to lower the proportion of women. For example in 1885 the Fiji Government Emigration Agent was instructed (at his own suggestion) to press for a reduction of the proportion of women to 33. In 1886 the Agent General of Immigration in Fiji wrote:

'A very general desire was evinced by employers of Indian immigrants in this Colony to procure a reduction in the prescribed proportion of females to males dispatched to the Colony from India. The difficulty generally experienced in obtaining female recruits in India, the small amount of work that can be performed by females in comparison with males owing to inferior physique and causes common to women, and the equality of the cost of introduction of males and females, furnish cogent reasons for the desire to obtain a reduction....Owing to the depressed condition of the sugar market, employers are striving to lessen the cost of production and a reduction in the prescribed proportion of females to males would be a boon to the master without danger of prejudice to the social condition of immigrants in the Colony' (AGI Annual Report for 1886 p 6).

This request was supported by the Protector of Emigrants at Calcutta because of the difficulty in procuring women. However the Government of India refused to allow a reduction in the proportion of women. They felt that too many evil practices would result (Gillion op cit p 56). Another request for reduction in the numbers of women followed in 1889 but again this was refused (ibid). In 1890 the Fiji Agent General of Immigration expressed dissatisfaction that the ship Moy had, in the previous year, brought a large number of single women with children. Forty three out of the 142 non-adults sent from Calcutta were children of single women and the AGI urged that 'It would be well if attention was again drawn to this matter with a view to reducing the number of

female adults introduced to 33 to every 100 men' (AGI Report for 1889 p 299), and in the following year fewer women were recruited, although it is unclear whether this was as a consequence of the request from Fiji, or because of the difficulty of procuring more women in that year. However ,although the AGI continued to agitate for a formal reduction, he was altogether unsuccessful. The percentage of women in the total labour force recruited for Fiji remained at just over thirty.

This low proportion of women, although not always favoured by the less well-off planters, was suitable for the needs of the industrial planter. As workers the women could be made to labour when the need arose, but as women they could be expected to service the men. There was a sufficient number of women for form work 'gangs' but an insufficient number to become 'wives' of all men.

Once individual women had been persuaded to travel to Fiji, they were taken to the depots. In the depots, there was strict segregation of men and women but many depot (or as the Indians called it 'deepoo') 'marriages' took place. Many of these were marriages of convenience and although they had not been conducted under religious sanction, the advantages of depot marriages for men and women were many. For a man, the advantage was that he had someone to cook for him and cater for his needs in a context where there were few companions. The women acquired a protector and some status as a married woman where everyone else was single. But many women refused to continue being married once they reached the colony. For example in 1894, in his Annual Report, the Agent General of Immigration in Fiji complained that three women who had been registered as 'wives' in their emigration papers refused to make a declaration of marriage upon reaching Fiji. They admitted that they had 'married' and co-habited with the men in India but now wished to part company. In one of these cases the abandoned husband had to be placed under restraint. At his own request he was not sent to the plantation to which his 'wife' was indentured (AGI Annual Report for 1894 p447). In 1899 12 couples, upon arrival in Fiji, insisted that they had been forced to marry by recruiters in India. They too refused to make a marriage declaration in Fiji (AGI Report for 1899 p 262). Sometimes recruiters would induce two emigrants to

register as husband and wife in order to prevent the authorities from making enquiries about the woman.(Gillion op cit p 57).

At the depot, the Indians had the first taste of their new 'deculturalised' status. Here they were all given the same type of clothing, and were forced to eat and associate with other people not of their caste. Women were issued with two flannel jackets (kurta), a woollen petticoat, worsted stockings, shoes and a sari (Tinker op cit p 140). Men were also dressed in wool, in preparation for the long and often cold journey across the water. For the West Indies and Fiji the coolies had to be sent off between September and February to get the best of the weather at sea (Tinker ibid p 139). Although it was possible to form associations (either sexual or platonic) in depots, these could not necessarily be maintained for often people would reside in the same depots but be sent off to different countries. Married couples were sent to the same country but other friendships could be only of a temporary nature. Since most emigrants were single there was no chance that associations of kinship were to be retained. In the export of Indian labourers overseas, relations based on kin became meaningless. Thus this important aspect of traditional Indian social formation could not be maintained because of the absence of kin. For women the effect of disintegrating kinship rules was remarkable. They could conduct their own sexual and emotional associations with men without kinship sanctions. There were no relatives or priests to tell them who they could 'marry', or which caste of people they could communicate with. They could eat whatever they liked, with whomever they liked. This was a kind of freedom they had not dreamt of, and although initially they must have been devastated by the strange ways of doing things, they quickly adapted to the new situation. The same lax rules applied to the men too, but Indian men had always been less constrained by kinship rules, such as child marriages, than women. Many women found their new experiences exciting. After all, most of them had willingly registered as emigrants. They were actively looking for a new life, away from the restrictions and cruelties of their previous one. Furthermore in the absence of their kin, they could challenge some of the ideas of male dominance which the men still held. The disintegration of kinship rules affected men because they could now no longer assume that women

would automatically act in a subordinate manner. Much reorganising of traditional expectations must have taken place at the depots, for when the women arrived in the colonies after their sojourn at the depots and at the end of the passage from India, they had become hardy and opinionated. Many had also picked up venereal diseases along the way, suggesting that they were hardly virtuous and docile Indian women waiting to be transported quietly and submissively to the colonies. While it is possible that many might have been raped, the strict administration of the depots for business reasons would have prevented such a criminal activity from taking place. It is more likely that both material and emotional incentives provided to women would have encouraged their free association with men in the depots.

Between 1879 and 1916 ships made eighty-seven voyages to Fiji. The average mortality was less than 1 percent on the ships, serviced as they were by experienced medical men. One of these, James Laing wrote a pamphlet on 'Practical Hints to Young Surgeons in the Coolie Emigration Service' (Pam No 471 3/89). As the examiner of emigrants in the depots, Laing pointed out that the examination of 'coolies' should include checking for diseases and the general state of the skin and muscular development, and 'note that if a coolie has a soft smooth skin he has probably been employed in housework and not as a field labourer; the arms and hands, making him move all the joints to see that he has free use of them; and look at the palms of his hands to see whether the skin is hard, as of one who has used them in labour..' (ibid p 10). He also urged that on the ships it was 'one of the most important duties of the Surgeon Superintendent to prevent by every means in his power any interference with the single women'. To prevent this occurring he suggested that rather than stopping men and women entering each others' specially reserved compartments by placing two wooden or iron bars two feet apart, sirdars (who were usually men of 'good caste' and likely to have influence over the emigrants) should be held responsible for the good conduct of the group under their charge. (ibid p 9). Single women were not to be permitted to go forward of the main hatch, nor were single men permitted aft '..in the event of any one of either sex being found out of their proper place, both the Sirdar in whose division the man or woman is found and the Sirdar in whose division he or she belongs, as well as the trespasses

themselves will be punished' (ibid p 32). He also suggested that the hospitals should be divided into male and female sections by a partition running fore and aft. Men and women should also be provided with 'closets', with the forward entrance of the women's closet closed up 'for reasons which it is not necessary to specify here, but which will be apparent enough to anyone making a voyage in one of these ships' (ibid p 11). As a punishment for women who misbehaved, Laing requested the carrying on ship of a couple of 'janta' or grinding mills. He also warned that coolies brought 'ganja' on board- '...some coolies will do anything for a little ganja (ibid p 15). Laing allocated more rations to 'sirdars, Bandharies, and Topazes and men doing regular work' and less rice and dhal (lentils) to the women (ibid p 26). In terms of duties on board the ship, women and men undertook the same type of work. In the making of chupattis for example, men would make the dough and women would roll it out into thin cakes. Men or boys would then take the rolled out dough to the galley where on hot plates they would apply the ghee to the chupattis. The daily diet of the emigrants on board ship would include about 22 ounces of rice, six ounces of dhal, six ounces of vegetables and two ounces of preserved mutton (ibid p 37).

On the voyage the ship's surgeon was also in charge of discipline. At the slightest sign of mutiny on board (as happened on one of his voyages) Laing advised putting the culprits in irons, and separating them from the rest of the coolies for a week. At the end of the week he 'chalked their faces, paraded them in front of their mates and forced them to promise to behave themselves' (ibid p 42). This naive way of dealing with the mutinous culprits on his voyage must have amused the other coolies for, in the case of the example that Laing used, they all goodhumouredly promised to thrash the men if they misbehaved again (ibid).

The most serious problem that could occur on board the ship was the 'jealousy from women being interfered with' (ibid p44). Laing suggested that in the case of any interference with the women by any of the Officers or crew of the ship, the matter had to be placed in the hands of the Master of the Ship, and if proved against any Officer, the Surgeon Superintendent should recommend to the Colonial Authorities

the deprivation of the whole or part of his gratuity' (ibid). Thus women were 'protected' from the lasciviousness of both white and Indian men. Therein lay the dilemma for many women. On the one hand they were recruited and transported like units of production yet on the other hand certain patriarchal rules for their protection as women were formulated by the authorities. As objects of investment therefore, their bodies had to be looked after. This was done by applying the patriarchal ideology of 'protection' of women.

On the ships the emigrants rose at six or seven a.m., and under the direction of the sirdar, folded their bed linen to hang them up. By eight a.m. they were supposed to be ready for breakfast. After breakfast men and women were expected to exercise, and afterwards, a full gang of men were set to work cleaning the decks. At noon dinner was served, and after dinner the emigrants sent below while the main-deck was washed down. Just before the evening meal, the sick people were isolated from the rest and treated by the Surgeon and his assistants. By eight p.m. the emigrants were expected to be in their bunks and asleep(ibid pp 49-50).

For the emigrants, life on the ships was difficult, although for the children it was sometimes exciting. An account by my maternal grandfather, Sahu Khan, who was only about 14 years old when he accompanied his uncle to Fiji in 1896, is one of the few surviving detailed accounts by an emigrant of a ship's journey to the islands. Sahu Khan's account is significant for two reasons. First, he illustrates the ways in which new ties of 'kinship' were constituted on board the ship in the absence of real kin, and second he distinguishes between the female professions of entertainer/dancer, and prostitute, thus debunking the assumptions of later observers (other survivors of the indenture experience) that the occupation of 'dancer' was synonymous with 'prostitution'.

'To begin with, one and all felt attached to each other, more as members of one family with so many factors of their lives being common to all. Men addressed each other as "Bhai" (brother) and the women as "Bahini" (sister). The younger folks were taught by their parents or guardians to address the older men as "Chacha" (paternal uncle) or Mama

(maternal uncle). The women were likewise called "Khala" or "Mausi" (maternal aunt) or "Chachi" (wife of paternal uncle), depending upon whether the women were with their husbands or single. I have often wondered how these newly-made relatives could be remembered, as to whether one was a "Chacha" or a "Mama" or a "Phupha", but what stronger proof would one need than the established fact that these relationships continued not only within the belly of the giant "Elbe" but for the remainder of their respective lives...Then again, apart from the relationship thus created by personal contact, there was the general feeling among all that they were Jahazi Bhai (ship-mate brothers)' (Sahu Khan, unpublished paper p 21).

Sahu Khan's account of the construction of 'kinship' on board the ship 'Elbe' outlines the ways in which Indians formed associations with each other despite the failure of their commonly understood ideas of kinship. Since kinship ties could no longer be based on marriage between people of the opposite sex within the context of male dominance, other associations resembling 'blood ties' were constructed to deal with alienation. Thus the new construction of 'kinship' was based on another form of male-oriented association- 'ship-mate brothers', which precluded the formation of sisterhood bonds. These bonds survived indenture, and till today older folk in Fiji remember and respect certain of their friends or the children of their friends as descendents of their 'jahazi bhais' (personal communication, fieldwork 1985). The relationship between women was as strong, although their association appeared not to be institutionalised in this way. Women were more likely to form bonds with each other as 'mothers', or as single women without children.

Thus the women who landed in Fiji had experienced a three month long journey with few kin or caste associations or restrictions. Upon their arrival in Fiji, this situation would have been reinforced by the nature of plantation production which enabled planters to allocate people other than those who were married (although sometimes they forgot to keep married couples together) to different plantations. Thus even the construction of the special form of 'kinship' on board the ship had to be maintained over some distance. When workers from different plantations who had travelled together met each other at

festivals or other ceremonial occasions they greeted each other as long-lost relatives.

On board the ship, the emigrants coped as best they could. Sahu Khan refers to the type of entertainment emigrants offered each other on the journey to Fiji. He describes those who travelled with their drums, 'chikaras' and Manjiras and those who offered dancing entertainment quite frequently. In Sahu Khan's own village setting the woman entertainer or dancer was given the name of 'Paturia', a profession distinct from that of a 'Kasbin' or prostitute. 'In those days, and in my own little mind, I could not draw a distinction between this professional dancer and "Kasbin" (Prostitute). For me both were occupied in a menial profession, but as I view the difference from this distance of time, I now quite clearly see them in their respective settings. The Mirasis (the travelling entertainers) have come down from generations as musicians and entertainers, and for them this is their profession, and they are called by their professional name which has become a caste in itself, and anyone born in this professional class is none other than a Mirasi whether he has any knowledge of music or not. The other class of woman is by choice, irrespective of her caste' (Sahu Khan op cit p 25).

Thus Sahu Khan made a distinction between the category of 'prostitute' and the category of 'dancer'. Those ignorant of Indian caste and class categories would have lumped the professional dancer in the same class as the professional prostitute, thus confusing the boundaries even for Indians themselves. On the plantations this would have been reinforced by the activities of the women themselves. As entertainers women would have been able to earn a living independently of indentured servitude. To supplement their income many dancers may have also become prostitutes, as sometimes occurred in India itself. At the same time however, the white officials observing Indian 'customs' on plantations during ceremonial occasions such as festivals and weddings undoubtedly confused the boundaries, assuming that dancers were also prostitutes, or alternatively, that the prostitutes danced to attract men.

Upon reaching Fiji the emigrants were taken from the ships on punts to the smaller off-shore islands for a period of quarantine. One of

these islands, Nukulau Depot, was a clearing house for the indentured labourers who were to be allocated to different plantations in Fiji. At the depot, the emigrants were inspected by the Agent General of Immigration and medically examined. The unfit were set aside for return to India or detained for medical treatment. Those who declared themselves to be husband and wife were registered as such and usually sent off to the same plantations.

The first vessel which arrived in Fiji from India was the Leonidas. This ship arrived in 1879 and the passengers had to remain in quarantine because of smallpox. Finally, of the survivors, 262 men, 137 women, 37 boys, 18 girls and 10 infants were allotted to various plantations and government work schemes (CSO MP 79/1983). Of the women, one, Sookia had contracted a serious case of venereal disease. The doctor reported that the woman had been 'little better than a prostitute' on board the ship from India. Eventually Sookia was taken for treatment to Levuka and her indenture cancelled. Sookia's case was not unusual. Many women, with various forms of venereal diseases, arrived in the depots. The worst cases were sent back to India but most women were treated and sent to work for the planters to whom they had been promised.

The planters had paid part of the cost of importation of the labourers. But only the workers were paid for. 'Work' was defined as that activity carried out in return for payment. Non-workers, i.e. those who had come with their partners and had no desire to work were not paid for by those who had made an application for labourers. Thus in 1881 an Indian woman who followed her policeman husband to Fiji could not be paid for by the Police Department who had indentured the man. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary the Auditor General, who was detailing the accounts, stated that the Police Department did not want the woman and therefore objected to her indenture fee being charged to them. The Auditor General advised that 'it would only be fair for the husband to do so, he being no doubt the only person who is necessarily the benefactor of his wife's services' (MP 82/1111). Implicit in this statement of a senior colonial official was the understanding of the utility of women's labour. If women were to labour for a planter or any other employer, then her indenture fees

could be paid by them. However, women who did not 'work' had to have their fees paid by their husbands as recipients of her labour. Thus there was a clear distinction between women's work in plantation production, and women's work in the home.

2. Women and Plantation Labour- work, wages and conditions

(i). Women and Taskwork

Women were allocated to planters in proportion to the men. In the first year of indentureship of the people from Leonidas, women were expected to labour alongside the men. But solidarity between labourers did not have the consequence of eliminating men's claims on women as property. The competition between men over the women led to one or two incidents of anti-woman violence. For example, in 1879, on Rabi Island (J.S. Hill's Estate), a male immigrant from the Leonidas decapitated his wife because she was supposed to have been unfaithful to him. He received six years imprisonment for this crime (Lal 1982 p 66).

The abuse of women was not confined to the privately owned estates. The colonial government had temporarily taken over the Great Amalgam Estate in Rewa in order to stamp out a coffee leaf disease which had just appeared in the Colony, and had transferred 139 men, 68 women and 18 children there from the initial batch of workers from the Leonidas. In 1880 there began to be complaints lodged about the treatment of workers by their sirdar, Abdullah, who was alleged to have taken money by force from the labourers for the purposes of gambling. In a letter to the governor of the Colony, six of the labourers asked that Abdullah be transferred from the estate (AGI Report for 1880). Furthermore, it was alleged by a police officer in charge of the investigation that Abdullah was also in the habit of beating up women. Abdullah was eventually removed from that estate, but increasingly reports were being received from other estates about the particular ill-treatment of women labourers by the male sirdars. The practice of abusing plantation labourers in general and women labourers in particular had become a feature of plantation production in Fiji from the earliest years of indenture. In the first years the labourers actively campaigned for the removal of such sirdars but eventually violence towards Indian 'coolies' became an ingrained aspect of servitude. Through violence or the threat of violence labourers were

kept in their place for the duration of their indenture, to the extent that the period of indenture became known as 'narak' (hell), or 'Kasbighar' (brothel) (Lal 1982 p 66).

The most significant employer of Indian labour in Fiji was the Colonial Sugar Refining Company of Australia (CSR). By 1881 the CSR was already established as one of the major employers of Indian labour on the Rewa River. Other companies growing cane were Sahl and Co., and J.C. Smith. By 1881, out of a total of 44 Indian men at task work for the CSR, only 34 were making one pound or more in the first four months. The manager was already complaining to the Agent general of Immigration that he could not get 'fair work' out of the men. Only about eight women out of the total of 26 were earning 15 shillings or more on the same plantations. Twenty four women had earnings between 10 and 15 shillings at the end of four months (CSO MP 81/2171). These low wages are indicative of CSR work methods rather than the labouring qualities of the indentured workers. CSR was always recognised in both Australia and Fiji as a difficult company to work for due to its insistence on squeezing as much work out of the labour as possible (see for example Sugar Commission Enquiries, 1912,1920 and 1930). Much of the exploitation of CSR Co of its Fiji workers can be explained by examining the origins of this industrial firm and of its autocratic heads, the Knox men.

The Colonial Sugar Refining Co had been formed in Australia on January 1 1855. Initially there were ten company shareholders, five of whom were directors of the company. Among them was a man by the name of Edward Knox who had been born and educated in Denmark, but at the age of twenty one had left for Australia. At twenty four Knox had taken over the management of the struggling Australasian Sugar Company which refined sugar. In 1854 the Australasian Sugar Company had been dissolved, and a new company, the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. formed. The new company was designed to become experienced in the sugar refining business. It also began raw sugar milling in northern New South Wales before investing in Fiji and Queensland.

The most important person, and the one who made the most mark on the company was Edward Knox. An autocratic and fiery young man, he had

quarrelled with his uncle in Denmark and had arrived in Australia in 1840 determined to make his fortune. By 1845, after a period as an accountant and a director, he began to buy and sell real estate. At age thirty five Knox already had the ability to bring 'his acute commercial sense and his flair for organisation' to the new Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR 1956 p 17). By 1857 the shareholders had decided to establish a sugar refinery and distillery on a larger scale, and thus ensued the formation of an associated company, the Victoria Sugar Company in Melbourne. However before any great fortunes of the company were made, there was a world-wide fall in the price of raw sugar which coincided with the depression in Australia. The company was caught with a large stock of expensive raw sugar on its hands. Knox, who was on his way to England at the time, returned to Australia and threw his energies into restoring the fortunes of his sugar company. As a partial answer to the problems of rapid fluctuations of the international market of raw sugar, he made the decision to grow the company's own supplies of sugar cane. The first plantations were established in 1863 in Northern New South Wales and Queensland. Knox sent his son, Edward William Knox to manage the new project. During the 1870s the company prospered and expanded. In 1880, Edward Knox handed over the day to day management of his company to his son. During the 1880s the firm expanded to Queensland and Fiji. During the first five years of E.W. Knox' managership three mills were established in Fiji. Two of these, Nausori Mill (on the Rewa River) and Viria were purely CSR ventures. In 1885 Rarawai Mill was also built as a joint venture with the New Zealand Sugar Company in which CSR had a controlling interest. Chelsea Refinery in Auckland New Zealand, which commenced refining in 1884 was also built by the CSR as agents for the part-owned New Zealand Sugar Company.

As early as 1879 E.W. Knox was already aware that in the near future sugar would be produced in Fiji: 'Sugar will be produced in Fiji sooner or later which will come into competition with ours; it is a question whether it will not be better for us to take a share in the development of the industry and the profits that will be realised' (ibid p 31). By 1881 contracts had already been obtained from planters in Fiji and after a visit to the Colony in 1881 Knox expressed satisfaction with the Fiji prospects (ibid p 32). By 1891 the company

was doing so well in Fiji that Knox made the decision to move CSR's Victoria Mill from Queensland, where labourers were agitating for higher wages and better work conditions, to Labasa on another major Fiji island group. In Labasa more work could be expected from the Indian workers who were lower paid than their white Australian counterparts (see Narsey 1979). By 1899 the company had made the decision to erect a further mill at Lautoka and by 1903 this mill was also operational. When the rest of the sugar colonies were suffering from a financial slump caused by falling sugar prices, CSR was busy expanding in Fiji (ibid p 97). In 1926 Penang Mill was bought by the CSR, thus establishing the company as the major grower and refiner of sugar cane in the colony. CSR had initially invested three million pounds in Fiji. Until the first world war, CSR made exceptionally good profits from its Fiji operations. Its production cost of sugar was about five pounds per ton. From the earliest days CSR was the largest employer of Indian immigrants, preferring to deal with Indians rather than 'Polynesians' who had become more expensive due to their increasing scarcity as a consequence of anti-blackbirding activities and premature deaths through over-exploitation.

CSR Co as a planter and refiner of sugar cane was in the category of 'industrial' rather than 'traditional' class of planter. Company officials on behalf of the shareholders owned or leased large tracts of land, and employed bonded labour, yet they promoted technological innovations and improved cultivation methods. The 1884 slump in the world price of sugar hardly affected the company for in the 1870s the Knoxes were among the first cane sugar manufacturers in the world to apply the science of chemistry to the company's factory processes. Thus the company survived the slump due to adequate capital (much of its reserves being re-invested rather than allocated to the shareholders as dividends), large scale production, and applied technical and scientific skills combined with good management.

But the biggest savings during the slump occurred because this financial burden was thrown onto the Indian labourers in Fiji. Under CSR entrepreneurship in Fiji racism was a relation of production in that black workers were employed over white workers in the interests of profit. Knox writing to one of his Fiji managers, James Robertson

in 1887 pointed out that 'the Europeans received during the crushing season in wages and rations some 6,200 pounds while the whole payment for coloured labour was only 4,750 pounds. The staff of white men has been greatly reduced this year and this should have an effect on expenditure' (ABL 142/2189 Fiji Out Letterbook 3). But Indians were cheaper than even Polynesians and Fijians. Working out the cost of paying Fijians and Polynesians and comparing this with Indians, Knox showed that 'coolies' were cheaper: viz coolies, 1/6 per day; Polynesians and Fijians 2/- per day'. By working Indians the Company could show a greater level of profit because the expenditure for labour was less. But in Australia the cheapness of black labour over the white had the consequence of cheapening the market price for sugar, which led to the passing of an Excise Tariff Act in 1902, designed to remove the Kanaka and other coloured nationalities engaged in the industry and to place sugar production as a protected industry upon a 'white' basis (Maxwell 1912 cited in Narsey op cit p 93). The ideal of the 'white Australia' policy also had the effect of bringing in an Import Duty of six pounds per ton of sugar produced by non-white labour (Narsey ibid). It was no wonder that CSR wished to continue investing in Fiji, and to sell its sugar via its New Zealand company to international markets. In 1912 the managing director of CSR, in giving evidence to the 1912 Commission of Enquiry in Australia, stated that the sugar imported from Fiji (and Java) in the five years up to 1910 after payment of import duty, cost CSR 1/8 per ton less than its Australian purchases (Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Paper No 59 1912 cited in Narsey p 94). According to Narsey this implies that 'even if one ignores the cost of freight and insurance in transporting Fiji sugar to Australia, Fiji sugar cost at least 5 pounds 6/8 per ton less to produce than Australian sugar. With CSR buying Australian sugar at roughly between ten and eleven pounds, this puts the cost of Fiji sugar at about five pounds per ton' (Narsey ibid).

The entire profit for Fiji and Australia declared for the year 1910 was given as 276,469 pounds. Of this, two hundred thousand pounds would have been made in Fiji, judging by the calculations of Narsey who used the 1912 Australian Sugar Commission Enquiry Report to work out the difference between the wages given to Indian workers on its

Fiji plantations and its white workers in Queensland. In Australia the labour costs were about 75 per cent of growing costs and about 50 per cent of milling costs (ibid).

'Since the raw sugar proceeds were divided in proportion giving 70 per cent to growers and 30 percent to millers, overall, labour costs were 68 percent of total costs (75 percent of 70 + 50 percent of 30)....In 1912, with Fiji labour costs about 15 per cent of Australian levels, the saving of 85 per cent on labour would eventually imply a saving of about 58 per cent on total costs (85 per cent of 68 per cent) and with a price of about ten pounds per ton of sugar, this saving would come to about five pounds 6/8 per ton due to labour cost difference alone, *ceteris paribus*. This figure is fairly close to the five pound 6/8 difference supplied by CSR's Managing Director to the 1912 Commission of Enquiry... CSR in Fiji was producing sugar at about half of what it cost in Australia and the difference was most probably almost entirely due to the difference in wages paid to white Australian labour and indentured immigrant labour in Fiji' (ibid p 95).

But CSR was not above exploiting even the white workers in Australia. The Commission noted that the one pound and ten shillings per week paid to mill workers in Australia was not adequate as a basic living wage (ibid p 95-96) In contrast, Indian workers in Fiji were being paid 5/6 per week, less than half that paid to white workers involved in the same type of work (ibid). Thus racism played an important part in the making of profit. Without the lower cost of black labour, CSR would have not been able to generate as much profits for its shareholders. But the exploitation of black workers did not occur only because they were seen to be cheaper. Many white men actually believed that coolies were sub-human. As Duncan, the manager of Labasa Mill wrote to Knox in 1904:

'In dealing with the coolie I have had 18 years experience and the more I see of the coolie the less I like him. Morally and socially I am, I think perfectly free from chance of contradiction when I say he is one of the most if not the most undesirable human being(s) in the wide world. Only for the labour of his hands, usually grudgingly given- if not forced- is he of value to us and only for this reason should he be tolerated or

encouraged. We should consider this before letting him into the white man's sphere. Coolies ruin machines' (ABL 142/I Labasa In 1904).

This view of the coolie male was extended to the coolie women except when her sexual services were required. Women faced the brunt of the sexual double-standard. As coolie women they were workers but as women they were objects of lust.

During the 1880s the Indian labourers were overtasked and paid extremely low wages. The Agent General in his Report for 1886 wrote of excessive mortality, imprisonment of physically incapable emigrants and of the 'tendency to establish a scale of tasks based on the capabilities of picked workmen and a percentage of prosecutions without parallel in any other country' (Narsey op cit p 81). Even CSR's General Manager in Sydney acknowledged that the tasks in Fiji were heavier than the West Indies and that 'he could not see any prospect of being able to get more work per day out of the labour than at present' (ibid). In 1885 it became obvious that neither the men nor the women were able to complete their tasks successfully. In a table compiled by the AGI for one plantation on the Rewa for 1885, the following was indicated:

Table 1

<u>No of tasks actually set</u>		<u>no of tasks completed</u>	
men	women	men	women
265 $\frac{1}{2}$	216 $\frac{1}{4}$	241	99 $\frac{1}{2}$

(Source AGI Report for 1885)

On the Rewa River a usual task would be to dig 150 sugar cane holes, weed 10-12 chains, surface drain 250-270 cubic feet and cut about 3 tons of sugar cane per day. Women could be expected to undertake any

of the work given to men, except their task requirement was lower for the same period of time.

In 1886 in the estimate of expenditure of the Rarawai Estate, the biggest cost to the company was that of labour-i.e. the introduction and maintenance of Indian field labour (CSR F1.0.5 2). By 1897 it was also beginning to be acknowledged by company officials that women's labour was not up to scratch. In correspondence between W.P Dixon, company official in Sydney and the manager of Labasa mill, Dixon asked that it be noted that there was a larger number of women 'labourers' at Labasa than at the company's Ba plantations and though perhaps these do not bear a greater proportion to the total number of labour, the amount of work for which women are suited is limited and thus you will have a considerable number of what may be termed non-effective labour..' (ABL 142/2055 Labasa Out).

What type of work did the company officials think women could undertake? The officials relied on the best women to join the male canecutters, although by 1911 they were beginning to think twice about employing women for such tasks due to the objections of the government doctor (ABL 142/2078 Manager Berry, Labasa to GM Sydney). At the same time the company officials did not think it wise to allow women not to be indentured for the same period as men. Men had five year indentures, and women, in practice, only three although most were re-engaged for another shorter term. This was so that both husband and wife (in cases where this occurred) could become free at the same time in order to prevent women leaving their indentured husbands for free men (ABL 142/2079 Labasa In Berry Manager to GM Syd}. (In 1918, women could commute their own indentures once their husbands became 'free'). Women's work involved weeding, and cutting 'tiri' (mangrove) and stripping cane leaves off the stalks prior to harvesting, a job men hated and refused to undertake, sometimes assaulting the overseer when requested to perform it(ABL 142/3082 Labasa Manager to Knox 1902). The company manager recommended the lash and prison discipline when men refused to work (ibid). But by 1903 the overall manager of CSR in Fiji had forbidden other managers to assault the coolies without a written defence statement. This order had become necessary 'for the coolies' protection' as far too many cases of assault of labour were

appearing in court (ABL 142/3083 Nausori Manager to Managers Rarawai, Lautoka and Labasa). By 1904 managers in Fiji were in agreement that women should be permitted either to commute their indentures, or that the company officials should make it possible for them to work off the estates (but still within the two mile limit allowed for in the statute), because of their low participation rate in plantation labour (ABL 142/2083 Labasa Manager to Nausori Manager). Commutation of indentures occurred when women or men paid a certain sum of money and 'became free'. However, when there was a labour shortage some abuses occurred. For example, in 1895 the Sydney manager writing to E.W. Fenner, manager of Nausori mill and often acting as CSR overall manager in Fiji commented on the practice of one Fiji company official who took the commutation fee from the women but forcibly retained them on the plantation. CSR Sydney manager Knox advised his Fiji officials to say as little as possible about the matter until the immigration department, which had lodged the complaint, 'has something else to occupy its attention' (ABL 142/1052 Private Out).

By 1915, due to the changing labour requirements of CSR Co in Fiji, single women were no longer desirable in the labour force. In this year CSR officials were already considering a new immigration scheme whereby families who could work on leasehold cane farms rather than single people for plantation labour were to be recruited. It also recommended in a minute to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that no prostitutes were to be taken from India and that on the recommendation of philanthropist C.F. Andrews, women should be permitted to give personal attention during the day to their children and prepare properly cooked meals for their husbands. The result was the mooting of the idea of the 'family wage', for in order to make up for the loss of earnings thus involved, it was recommended that the minimum daily wages paid to the married men be increased to 1 shilling and 9d, or alternatively, a daily allowance was to be made to the wife or to provide the couple with food rations (CSR F.4.0.2. 15). It was also recommended by the colonial government officials that the proposed marriage ordinance for Indians would lessen the evils arising from exploitation of single women workers (C 64/ 1915). The marriage ordinance was also seen as useful for eradication of male suicides (ibid).

By 1916 CSR was seriously considering the wastage of labour power through the employment of women. In planning for the possibility of new rules of emigration from India CSR asked to be informed of the proportion of women workers recruited. 'A fair percentage of them will have to work for their subsistence, as during the shortage period of "industrial service" their men will not be able to accumulate sufficient funds to keep them in idleness' ((Knox to Nausori Manager ABL 142/1062). CSR also wanted to know what proportion of children under eight, for which rations had to be provided, were to be recruited under any new scheme. (ibid). In 1917 CSR was relieved that the government officials had themselves suggested the exemption of women from compulsory service (ABL 142/2564 Knox to Hughes). Knox suggested however that women should continue to work at their normal rates of pay throughout the period of their indentured service but that they should work only at their own option (ibid). Moreover women who were pregnant and nursing should be provided with rations, and children with milk. Plots for gardens were also recommended for the male labourer and his family (ibid). Furthermore the company officials recommended that no women should be permitted to enter the colony unless in the company of their husbands or parents (ibid).

The changing requirements of CSR officials with respect to the employment of women reflects the tension between the directorship in the Head Office in Sydney, the Colonial State Officials in Fiji, and the managers of individual plantations and mills. Head Office wanted to see a profit, but officials there recognised that profits could only be made if a regular supply of workers was forthcoming. Thus on no account were the women to be treated badly on the plantations because they were conscious that philanthropists were still keeping an eye on their Fiji operations. But at the same time, men at the Sydney Head Office insisted that labour power was to be worked efficiently on the estates. How the individual managers did this was their own business. Thus officials from Sydney often turned a blind eye to individual acts of cruelty or overtasking of women. In case of public outcry about the treatment of individual women, CSR heads quickly changed policy with regard to the employment of women.

The colonial state officials recognised that without CSR the colony would be in jeopardy. Yet they were also responsible to London where important statesmen were very sensitive to philanthropic influence. Fiji officials were anxious that labour supply would not be interfered with but not to the extent that they would be blamed for permitting super-exploitation to become rampant in Fiji. Thus government inspectors tended to keep a lid on various inhumane treatment of indentured workers and stipendiary magistrates ensured that labourers would be fined or sent back to work if they failed at their tasks. The law was used with impunity to extract more work out of the labourers.

The CSR managers in Fiji were caught in a bind. Head Office expected financial returns while government officials expected their exploitation to be 'humane'. Only the managers knew the difficulties of attempting to get maximum work out of the labourers. These were expressed very clearly in their oscillating practices regarding women's employment- some withdrew women from the labour force, others treated them the same as men. Thus women's employment in Fiji was affected by 1) the international price of sugar; 2) policy directives of CSR Head Officials (who may not have realised the extent of the pressure on individual managers with respect to women's employment); and 3) the ideas of individual male managers about the suitability of women for field labour. Women's work participation during all the years of indenture was thus affected by all these different perspectives and interests of the white men in charge of plantation production of sugar cane in Fiji.

During most of the indentured period, both men and women were expected to undertake task work. Women's tasks were set at three quarters of a man's tasks. Another type of work for women, particularly the older or weaker women, was to look after the children of the labourers in the line nurseries which, until 1910, were rough rooms at either end of the lines. This work was paid for by the company, its officials realising that unless women were provided with childcare they would not work on the plantations. Midwives were also paid for by the company at the rate of 9d per day until 1914, and 1 shilling thereafter (ABL 142/2087 Intermill Correspondence Labasa to Nausori).

The women always worked in a separate gang with the male overseer or sirdar in charge. There is no evidence to suggest that women were ever in charge of their own gangs. It was recognised by the company officials that men only could control the women (see Gill op cit Chapter 5). Throughout the years of indenture women's failure to complete their tasks imposed much financial hardship on them. This can be understood with reference to the wages women received during all their years of indentured servitude.

(ii). Women's Wages on plantations.

The contract the Indian emigrants had entered into in India had stipulated wage rates of ninepence a day for women and one shilling a day for men. However, as Narsey points out, the agreement they had signed in India expressed their wages in Indian currency (Narsey op cit p 80). Indians were not aware that the cost of living in Fiji was higher than that in India (ibid). Time work was abandoned by the CSR very early on. The company officials preferred to introduce 'task' work which was defined as the amount of work an able-bodied adult male could do in six hours steady work (Narsey ibid, Gillion op cit p 82). The employers were to decide what constituted a task. By the 1880s the indentured labourers were beginning to feel the effects of overtasking. The world market price for sugar slumped and the costs of production were reduced by working the labourers harder and by cutting their wages for incompleteness of tasks. As usual women felt the brunt of taskmasters' decision to cut production costs. On CSR estates in 1890, 42 percent of the women were earning less than 5d per day, and fully a third of the men were earning less than 8d per day (Narsey ibid p 86). In 1902 the average earnings of men were 11.52d per working day, and for women this figure was 6.14d per working day. In the next ten years there was a slight increase of 1 penny per day (Gillion op cit p 110), although for women the increase to 6.54d per day by 1915 was hardly significant because this was offset by the increase in prices (Narsey op cit p 86). It was evident that rations for coolies were becoming costly during the war years. In comparing the cost of food for coolies prior to 1914 with that during 1914, (i.e. over a two month period) the Labasa mill manager composed the following table:

Table 2

Coolie rations for 1915

<u>Prices</u>	<u>Before</u>	<u>Now</u>
Ghee	1/6d	1/9-2/-
Mustard Oil	1/-	1/3-1/6
Dhal	1/- (5lbs)	1/- (4lbs)
White broken rice, Patna and Ballam rice	2/- for 18-20lbs (local)	
Sharps	5/- - 5/6 (1gr)	6/6
Salt	1/- (8lbs)	1/- (5lbs)
Matches	3/- (gross)	4/- (gross)

(Source: ABL 142/2087 Labasa Intermill 1914)

The manager admitted that shopkeepers had increased their prices, but he said consumers were also responsible for the increased prices because of panic buying (ibid). In the same correspondence Nausori manager asked the manager of Labasa to explain the low earnings of women which had been noticed by the Agent General of Immigration. The Nausori manager also wished to be informed of the earnings and work participation of women whose husbands were earning less than 5/6 per

week. The Labasa mill manager responded that women could work if they wished. The directive from the Nausori manager was that 'the women whose husbands earn less than 5/6 per week must be in bad plight and they should not be exempt from work' (ibid). Even CSR managers themselves were aware of the effect of the severe tasks on women's earnings.

The low rate of women's wages were of particular concern to the Agents General of Immigration who in their Annual Reports frequently censured the CSR for paying the female workers very little (AGI Reports 1891-1918). The following table (Table 3) illustrates the wages earned by women on CSR estates in Fiji between 1890 and 1917.

Table 3 Average daily wage per working day

<u>Year</u>	<u>Pence</u>
1890	5.19
1891	5.10
1892	5.52
1893	5.58
1894	5.66
1895	5.60
1896	6.15
1897	6.07
1898	5.77
1899	5.79
1900	5.68
1901	unavailable
1902	6.14
1903	5.61
1904	5.80
1905	5.84

Table 3 contd

<u>Year</u>	<u>Pence</u>
1906	unavailable
1907	5.93
1908	6.13
1909	6.52
1910	6.09
1911	unavailable
1912	6.58
1913	6.54
1914	6.61
1915	6.54
1916	6.56
1917	7.17

Source AGI Reports 1891-1918)

Not once during this period did the wages of women reach 9d per day, the statutory wage for women under indenture. The low wages of women were always dismissed by the company, its officials pointing out that women did not work as many days as the men, and that they were not suitable for hard work. Nevertheless company heads in Sydney had to take the AGI comments seriously for on government officials depended the availability of regular supplies of labour. In 1915 for example, the general manager in Sydney pointed out that two years previously the AGI Report had condemned the Labasa rate of wages given to women workers.

'Not only was the average rate per working day the lowest of all estates in Fiji, due partly to the small percentage of workers (48 per cent), but the rate per day actually worked was also extremely low. Hope that the returns for last year will place you in a more favourable position, but in any case the question arises whether, if you have a larger

surplus of women whom you find it difficult to keep employed, it would not be possible to get a number of them to commute' (ABL 142/2063 Sydney to Labasa).

Women were to be permitted to pay off their commutation fee in installments at the rate of two pounds ten shillings per annum. 'This is considered preferable to complete commutation and makes it easier for the women to find the money'(ibid). By permitting the women to pay off their commutation fee in installments, the company officers were still able to retain their hold on women in case their participation in plantation labour was to be needed at any time, thus retaining their reserve army of labour. For women, commutation meant that those with husbands or partners were to be taken out of employment, either permanently or periodically, the burden for their reproduction thus falling on the man, who in most cases was not himself a good earner.

The company had always been ambivalent about women working in plantation production, although at various intervals women's labour had been useful. In 1908 Labasa manager in a letter to Sydney head office pointed out that

'Personally I am adverse to women working under compulsion, or at all, at ordinary fieldwork, especially in the wet season and have previously pointed this out to you but I know others in high places do not agree with me- so that I now recommend another alternative...I see no reason why we should take the burden of remedying the defects of the indenture system (on our shoulders alone), far less impose them on fellow planters less able than we are to stand up to the expenditure this would entail'.

He proposed that there should be imposed a heavy marriage regulation fee on Indians (of about one pound for each party) so that they could also carry the burden of loss of labour. The manager noted that Indians would not mind paying the high marriage fee as they would consider the bond to be stronger (ABL 142/2077 Labasa In). He was also of the opinion that without compulsion less than 10 per cent of the women would labour in the fields, 'at least till such a time that the colony is filled up with coolies and competition among the free

people compels work to stave starvation' (ibid). Thus the manager was recommending that women should work because under conditions of scarcity, this was the only way labourers could be prevented from demanding a fair wage. Once there was an abundance of labour, there would be no need for compulsion, for the planters could offer a certain wage which the labourers would be compelled to take.

But the gradual availability of free labourers for plantation work had effects on women in another way. Once free male labourers began seeking employment, a Labasa manager made the women on his plantation redundant: 'A number of free coolies want employment. I have hitherto employed as many as work could be found for, and to help in this direction ceased working indentured women for the limit of the period allowed by law' (ABL 142/2079 Labasa In 1913). This decision was in keeping with the rapid reorganisation of labour internationally. In Fiji questions were being raised about the desirability of engaging 'free' coolies rather than asking for another allotment of indentured men. There was a sufficient number of free labourers now available from among the time-expired, and company officials had to make a decision about free versus bonded labour. In the interest of promoting free labour, the first set of bonded labourers that had to go were the women. Women indentured workers who had spent their indenture slaving for little money were now to make place for free men. The availability of free workers was by 1913 already beginning to threaten indentured servitude.

There are several important aspects to be noted about the work and wages of plantation women in Fiji: first, the recruitment of women took place on the condition that the new recruits would be used to work, and that they would be single emigrants who could rely only on themselves in order to reproduce their labour power. But it was understood that the recruitment of women would entail more than mere exploitation of labour power in the canefields. The unique capabilities of Indian women (like all other women) included their ability to 'keep house' for men. Thus there was a particular advantage in having a limited proportion of women in the labour force. Not only could women be made to work on plantations as field labour, they could also maintain the male labour force if this was organised and

orchestrated. In the first years of indenture therefore women were expected also to produce for men. The low proportion of women in the labour force ensured that women would be valued in terms of their 'scarcity', and that their labour as wives and lovers would mediate their relationship as workers. But it became quickly obvious that women's labour in the fields was not offered as regularly or as meaningfully as it might have been, precisely because of the expectation that women would also service the men. Thus women's labour was frequently withdrawn for the purposes of biological reproduction and nurturance i.e. for pregnancy and nursing. The overwhelming irregularity of women in field labour reinforced their position as wives, lovers and partners of men, i.e. as reproducers of men, and in the later stages of indenture, of children. This prevented the CSR from offering women any work at all, or from offering them work only periodically during periods of labour shortage. Women were eliminated from work altogether when free men became available as workers. Throughout the period of indenture therefore, women's paid participation in field work was mediated by 1) their enforced relegation into the realm of femininity and, 2) by their extreme exploitation as workers in the sugar sector which meant overtasking and cutting of wages. This in turn reinforced women's position in the domestic arena. The consequences of overtasking and enforced domestication upon women can be assessed through an examination of the general health and welfare of women on the plantations.

(iii). Health and Welfare of Women on Fiji's CSR plantations

Women's low wages and frequent redundancies due to their failure to complete tasks set had immediate repercussions for their well-being on the plantations. This will be examined with reference to two significant aspects: first, the breakdown in women's health, leading to infant mortality, contraction of debilitating illnesses, and frequent absenteeism resulting in further pay cuts; and second the nature of plantation violence which exacerbated women's subordination to the plantation hierarchy.

a. Health of women and children on plantations

In all the years of indenture, the colonial government regulated and controlled the supply of labourers to Fiji but in no sense did

government officials ever directly oppose the needs of the CSR, recognising that without CSR investment, the colony would not be able to maintain its financial footing. As Narsey puts it 'From the very beginning of CSR's operations Fiji's well-being was seen as inseparable from that of the company by the Colonial Government.' (Narsey op cit p 80). Correspondence between various colonial governors and the CSR general Manager reveal how close the connections between the company and the colonial state actually were (CSR F.2.0.32 and ABL 142/3163). Nevertheless, in keeping with the responsibilities of a colonial state, state officials were anxious that private companies such as the CSR would not jeopardise the colony's association with India or England. Thus, part of the regulatory mechanisms of the state included an official responsibility, through various agents, for ensuring that conditions would remain favourable for accumulation of wealth without hindrance from philanthropists overseas. Since the days of the anti-slavists, vigilance on the subject of labour conditions in British colonies had not been relaxed, although much of the previous political clout of the emancipists had become weakened. However, officials in Britain and India were anxious that planter exploitation of labour in the colonies would not revert to slavery and to that end there had been developed an intricate web of government departments (such as the Immigration and Health Departments) which monitored and reported on the condition of labourers on individual plantations. These reports were perused regularly by the state officials in India and Britain.

But quite apart from regulating and monitoring abuses on the part of planters, the colonial state officials also punished offenders who had 'transgressed' the labour laws of the colony. Much of this 'transgression' could be monitored under the penalty clauses of the labour laws by which means the colonial stipendiary magistrates could fine, imprison or extend indentures of labourers who refused or were unable to work. It becomes obvious from the evidence that in Fiji the state officials were rarely on the side of the labourers. They appeared to favour the officials of the CSR unless the offence against labour was so great that it could not be ignored. In the case of male workers the consequences for transgression of the labour laws were severe. A great number of men spent their time in gaol or had their

indentures extended under the labour laws. During most of the years of indenture women were not persecuted under these laws as often as men, although their work participation rate was lower than that of men. Women's excuses that they were pregnant or nursing often permitted them an escape from the harsh labour laws. Although many women went to gaol, officials frowned at gaoling women particularly as many brought their children with them, claiming that there was no alternative childcare (CSO MP 86/1031).

Women's fate on plantations was affected by their earnings and by overtasking. Of particular concern to the state officials was the frequent breakdown in women's health. The wages of the workers did not correspond to the cost of living in the colony and as early as 1881 colonial secretary J.B. Thurston had asked Stipendiary Magistrate A Taylor to watch out for employers who sent their labourers in the bush to find wild food (CSO Outward 81/61). In 1884 the Fijians from Bau complained that Indians were in the habit of stealing yams from their plantations. A male Indian, Baldeo, was sentenced to one months hard labour in Suva Gaol for this offence (CSO MP 84/2139). In 1885 a 45 year old Madrassi woman committed suicide by jumping into the Rewa River and her death was blamed on her failure to work and earn rations. She had apparently lived off other Madrassi women (CSO MP 85/2791).

By 1891 government officials could no longer ignore the Indians' health problems which were blamed on malnutrition. In that year, commenting on the death rate of plantation infants (61 out of a total of 341), the Agent General of Immigration pointed out that 'negligence and indifference of the parents and also the debility and want of proper nourishment of the mother must account for the mortality among children, especially infants' (Annual Report for 1891 p 13). In most cases the death among adults was attributed to 'want of proper nourishment'. The 'rate of loss' of adults on plantations can also be attributed to insufficient food. The following table indicates the percentage of both male and female labourers 'lost' either through death or repatriation to India in five years of indentured servitude between the years 1895 and 1900. It is evident from the table that a

greater percentage of the labour of women and children was lost during these years than that of men.

Table 4 Percentage Lost in 5 years

Immigrant of 5 yrs			Male adults	Female adults	Children	Total
<u>Commencing</u>		<u>Ending</u>				
1895	-	1900	16.33	20.40	36.16	19.75
1896	-	1901	11.45	16.33	18.02	13.82
1897	-	1902	10.89	12.29	13.86	11.49
1898	-	1903	10.33	12.10	23.52	11.25
1899	-	1904	8.42	15.53	24.32	11.01
1900	-	1905	12.61	16.43	30.43	14.98

Source AGI Report for 1905

In 1897 the blame for the high death rate of children was once again placed firmly with the mothers: 'In many cases the apathy, want of cleanliness or ignorance of the mother has resulted in gross neglect: while there are no doubt cases in which the child's death has been wilfully induced', said the AGI in his Report for 1898. One child had apparently died of opium poisoning that year and both the mother and the nurse were suspected of administering it, though nothing could be proved. (1)

As the death rate of children increased on plantations, further excuses on behalf of the company were made by the AGI: '(This) is not due to want of attention to the care of children by employers. Much trouble and some expense has been taken to provide nurses and nurseries for children and in attending to the wants of mothers at

childbirth and of their infants. The apathy and ignorance of the mothers induces neglect or improper treatment of their children in many cases' (AGI Report for 1899 p 16). This statement was made despite an earlier statement that the 'debility' of mothers was blame for infant mortality. The mortality of children was particularly high in 1897 and 1900 when 21 per cent of the children of indentured parents died in the year of birth. Of the total number of children that died, 70 per cent had been born to indentured women. Of all the natural deaths on the plantations, the majority were caused by diarrhoea, dysentery, diseases of the respiratory system, and for children, apart from these, congenital syphilis.

In his reports, the AGI rarely chastised the employers for exploiting their workers severely to the detriment of their health. To the contrary, illness and incapacity were inevitably blamed on the laziness of the workers themselves, or on the class of emigrants that had been sent from India, completely ignoring the fact that emigrants had to undergo two medical examinations, one at departure and another upon arrival. The 1890s, when the CSR officials and shareholders (about 25 per cent of whom were Australian women) were attempting to recover from their losses of the previous decade, were gruesome for most labourers but particularly for women. There was a higher number of prosecutions of women, a higher infant mortality rate, more illness and a marked increase in violent and accidental deaths. In 1896 58 percent of the women also had their indentures extended averaging 40 working days per woman (AGI Report for 1896). In comparison, 49 per cent of the men faced orders of extension. Moreover women's wages actually dropped in several of the years after 1895 while their work participation increased. (see Table 5 below).

Table 5 Earnings and percentage of days worked (female).

Year	% of days worked (female)	Earnings per working day (pence)
1894	68.72	5.66
1895	71.29	5.60

Table 5 contd

Year	% of days worked (female)	Earnings per working day (pence)
1897	71.54	6.07
1898	72.32	5.77
1899	70.99	5.79
1900	73.38	5.68
1902	75.52	6.14
1903	75.68	5.61
1909	74.88	6.52
1910	75.54	6.09
1914	76.00	6.61
1915	77.18	6.54

(Source: AGI Reports 1894-1916)

CSR plantations in the Macuata District were infamous for their treatment of women. It appeared that at these plantations women frequently earned less than 5 pence per day (AGI Reports 1894-1913). Furthermore they were also subjected to violence, for in the absence of the desire of women emigrants to work for such little pay and such long hours, violence was used to 'encourage' them.

b. Women and Plantation Violence

On all plantations female labourers worked under contract. As already stated the contractual obligation the Indian women had entered into at the start of their labour service stipulated bondage to an employer for a period of three-five years at the sum of 9 pence per day. Although the period of contract was always loosely defined for women it was understood that their labour power was to be applied in the plantation production process. But plantation production was unlike any other production process in that extra-economic coercion was always used to achieve maximum surplus out of workers who were often

unwilling to be exploited, and frequently resisted their masters. Thus plantation production was always characterised by violence for without violence or the threat of violence workers were unlikely to expend their labour for the benefit of their employers.

The plantation production process in Fiji was no exception. Cane cultivation and harvesting required the expenditure of much energy and resourcefulness. Sugar cane production involved clearing the ground for planting, sowing the cane 'seeds', weeding the young crop, stripping the leaves prior to harvest, harvesting the cane by hand, taking it to the mills and then milling so that raw sugar could be produced. The sugar was then put into bags which were carried to the waiting ships for transport to the refineries overseas. It was always hard work, and by the end of the day all labourers were exhausted. At the end of their 11-14 hour day, most workers dropped into their beds for a few hours of exhausted sleep before being woken at 4 or 5a.m. the next day to start all over again. During the slack season when cane did not have to be looked after quite so diligently, there were always other types of heavy work to do around the plantation. Since the pay of workers hardly ever covered their costs of reproduction, there was no economic compulsion to work to earn a decent living. Under such circumstances it was inevitable that the indentured labourers would be unwilling and reluctant workers. The employers always complained about 'lazy' Indians and attempted to force them to work through violence.

One of the defining features of an overseer or a sirdar was the whip. Whips were always part of the attire of those in charge of work gangs and these people did not refrain from using them if the need arose. Even if the whip was never used by certain of the more humane plantation authorities, its presence ensured that directives and orders would be followed without question.

Women were not exempt from violence on the part of overseers or sirdars. Although there was a 'gentleman's' understanding among the CSR managers in Fiji and Sydney that women should not be forced to work by the threat of the whip, individual overseers and sirdars beat up and assaulted women with impunity. It was often difficult for the

state officials to monitor individual acts of violence on the plantations because each plantation was like a miniture kingdom. It was only possible to judge the extent of the violence against women when the cases appeared either before a Stipendiary Magistrate or a government inspector whose job it was to inspect individual plantations for abuse of labourers. Quite often however the inspectors taken into government service had been CSR overseers previously and they were in no position to make fair judgements about complaints against plantation personnel.

In 1897 the Stipendiary Magistrate of Macuata, N. Chalmers fined a white overseer 20 pounds for assaulting women on two separate occasions. The overseer, Burnside had repeatedly been cautioned by the CSR manager of his estate and finally, after two further complaints, the magistrate threatened him with imprisonment. Chalmers told the Colonial Secretary that in his opinion there were far too many assaults of women by overseers (CSO MP 1644/1897). In 1901 an indentured women, having been served with a summons for some labour offence, challenged her overseer for an explanation. He pushed her away and she fell. The women, angry at this treatment, caught hold of his shirt and tried to pull it from his trousers. For this she was fined two pounds. For this woman, two pounds would have represented one fifth of her yearly income after her food requirements had been met. It was a particularly harsh punishment considering that her 'assault' of the overseer had not caused physical harm. When called upon to explain this by the Colonial Secretary, the the plantation manager's reply was that the woman was a great troublemaker and defiant of all authority. In this case the Stipendiary Magistrate agreed with the employer: 'when small fines are imposed it has not the least effect on women of this class as the fines are always paid by men'. He added that the woman wanted to provoke the overseer into assaulting her so he would get into trouble. But colonial officials accused the Stipendiary Magistrate of favouring the 'white skin over the black'. The magistrate denied this arguing that it was impossible for people 'not on the spot to judge the annoyance and often gross insults to which overseers are constantly exposed by the women labourers' (CSO MP 1179/1901). In 1901 in another case a woman by the name of Rahsa complained of assault by a sirdar, again at Macuata. She

was fined one pound by the Stipendiary Magistrate who believed she had assaulted the sirdar (ibid).

Many colonial officials believed that most of the lawlessness on the Labasa plantations was caused by the severity of punishments imposed upon the labourers and the comparative immunity from deterrent punishment enjoyed by those in authority over them. It was not often that complaints of cruelty on the part of the overseer or sirdar even reached the courts. In the first instance the labourer had to complain to government inspectors who visited at six-weekly intervals. The inspection took place after a courtesy call at the manager's house. Labourers were well aware of this and the fact that government inspectors often protected overseers from getting blamed for assaults and violence. Managers themselves turned a blind eye to their labourers' complaints. In 1910 an overseer at Nasavusavu was accused of severely beating up a woman. He denied this, arguing that he had only placed his hands on her when assisting her to go to hospital. His manager asked the overseer thrice whether he had assaulted the woman....'he declared he was entirely innocent of the charge. I must therefore believe him, for I cannot understand any white man, worthy of the name beating a woman as the woman was beaten, more especially as she was in a delicate condition of health'. The sirdar also accused the overseer of beating the woman and giving him (the sirdar) money to take the blame. The sirdar was accused by white plantation personnel of attempting to frame the overseer and a full report was asked for by the General Manager in Sydney (ABL 142/3083).

CSR officials in Sydney were very anxious that acts of violence on the part of the white authorities or their black lackeys would not jeopardise profit-making. In an important circular to all staff in Fiji the Fiji Manager had, in 1903, already pointed out that it was undesirable for coolies to be struck by overseers and sirdars; 'Besides the evil effects on the moral character of a man by the systematic cuffing of labour for trivial faults, which more tact might easily have avoided, such treatment is characterised by outsiders as 'slavery' and if tolerated by the Company, is likely to seriously affect its source of labour supply from India'. The circular ended with the threat that officers in charge of labour would take heed if

they valued their position in the service (ABL 142/3135). The warning to sirdars was also explicit. Indian men in authority were not exempt from indulging in various acts of cruelty against women workers. Situated as they were in the plantation hierarchy many abused their position of power. They were also wealthier than other Indian labourers. The weekly wages of sirdars ranged from 10-12 shillings and individual sirdars were able to accumulate more wealth than other Indians within the plantation.

In cases of severe assaults on the part of company personnel, even the most hardened of government officials could not turn a blind eye. In 1910 the CSR manager at Nausori 'expressed regret' that the AGI had thought it necessary to proceed against CSR Co's Nadroga officers at the Stipendiary Magistrate's court at Nadi. But the AGI replied with justification that the Department of Immigration had to give the 'poor creatures' (labourers) a chance of making their complaint, pointing out that the company did not dismiss the sirdars for ill-treating coolies until after their offences had been proved in a court of law. The AGI also pointed out that there had been a grave offence a few years previously when a sirdar was convicted of 'kicking a woman in the private' whilst she was working on the Ba/Tavua tramline. The manager had apparently ridiculed the complaint and retained the sirdar's services. The AGI also complained that CSR coolies were being worked too hard in the fields which was unfair to newcomers. The manager at Nausori sent on a resume of the AGI complaints to the general manager in the Sydney head office.

In the primary and secondary accounts of the conditions of work for plantation women, the assaults on women as labourers is often discussed and analysed on the same terms as the assaults on women as women (incorporating sexual molestation, rape and murder on the grounds of sexual deviance) (see for example Gillion op cit; Lal 1985 a and b; Naidu op cit). In my view this has led to an incomprehension of the difference between the status of women as labourers in the field, and as people with particular feminine attributes. As unfree field workers women were assaulted for the same 'crimes' as men. If they failed to complete a task, or if they challenged the overseer or sirdar as workers, then they were punished accordingly. They were

flogged, whipped or brutalised similar to men. The woman referred to above who was 'kicked in the private' by her sirdar was assaulted in that part of her anatomy in the same way that many men were brutalised by the overseers etc 'putting the boot in'. Assaults of this nature were carried out not because women and men were being distinguished on the basis of their sex, but because these distinctions did not apply all the time during plantation production. As workers under punishment women could be treated the same as men. This is not to say however, that sexual distinctions never impinged upon the treatment of all labourers on plantations. As will be shown in the next chapter, special forms of punishment were reserved for women 'workers' that took into account their sex.

Indian women's work during indenture involved the production of surplus for the company. From the beginning of their journey women were compelled to produce under certain conditions of production which controlled their labour supply, and monitored and exploited their labour power on plantations under both economic and extra-economic coercion. The surplus was extracted from women by the use of three recruitment and plantation production methods: First, women were few in number and thus were compelled to negotiate with men for personal safety in return for unpaid labour. Secondly, they were overworked at their tasks so that completion of the day's work was practically impossible. This led to a cut in wages, which even at ninepence had not been adequate to cover their costs of reproduction which was provided in the form of paid rations in the first six months and during pregnancy and nursing. Thirdly, they were forced to work for a pittance by the use of violence on the part of plantation authorities. But this situation was shared by men too. How did women's plantation work differ from men's work, and how was their surplus extraction different from that of men?

At the level of plantation production women's exploitation was different from men in one significant aspect. On plantations, women were the reserve army of labour and as such they were forced to accept lower rates of pay in order to meet their basic requirements. Those women who wanted to work were constrained by the ideology that all women would rather stay at home. Thus women could be obtained for a

cheaper price. Their payment could be in the form of rations rather than money (especially during their confinement for pregnancy), or cut wages on the grounds that women could not work as hard as men. It was through this view of women as 'unemployed' or partially employed that surplus was extracted from women different from that extracted from men.

The surplus labour extracted from women was appropriated by the CSR and translated into profit in the arena of the market. I use the term surplus labour rather than surplus value because the latter term is usually used only with reference to capitalist production, and I have already stated that Fiji under indenture cannot be termed 'capitalist' because of the existence of bonded rather than 'free' labour. Although it is clear that accumulation of capital in preparation for the transition to capitalism was taking place (i.e. primitive accumulation), the goods that were being produced were being produced under unfree relations for the capitalist market. Sugar produced by Indians' unfree labour was being exchanged in the capitalist markets for profit. But it must be remembered that at the same time however Indians were not totally unfree. They were bonded for a few years at a wage which only partially paid for their reproduction costs. Thus there was partial commodification of labour power because, as is obvious from the evidence, this 'wage' was insufficient to keep them in health. The percentage of workers 'lost' in the first year of indenture is indicative of this state of affairs. Thus the product being produced under partial commodification of labour power must be discussed in terms of production of surplus labour only. Surplus labour can be produced within any mode of production. The production of surplus value is another matter. Surplus value can only be produced under conditions where there is full commodification of labour power. Under indenture there was only partial commodification, leading to much death and illness on the plantations. But surplus value was produced by those who had commuted their terms of indenture and who offered their labour power for sale to the CSR. These were employed on the plantations too, often alongside indentured labourers. Free labourers commanded a higher wage.

In the marxist literature (see Marx Capital Vol 1 1954; Braverman 1974; Bottomore op cit and Mandel 1970) surplus value is said to be derived from the difference between the value of the product and the value of the capital involved in the process of production. The product belongs to the capitalist. The capital involved in the production process has two parts: constant capital (which corresponds to the value laid out in the means of production and is simply transferred to the product during the process of production), and variable capital (used to employ workers who sell their labour power for a value). Variable capital is 'variable' because its quantity arises within the process of production, i.e. what starts as value of labour power ends up as the value produced by that labour power in action. Surplus value is the difference between the two, i.e. the value produced by the worker which is appropriated by the capitalist without equivalent given in exchange. Although there is no unfair exchange here, i.e. at the level of payment for labour power, the capitalist still ends up as the appropriator of the surplus unpaid labour of workers because he exchanges it and pockets that part of the value of the product produced without payment by the workers. It is in the expectation of this production of surplus value that the workers are employed. Since workers cannot make use of their value-creating ability themselves (they are divorced from their means of production) they are forced into a position of creating this value for capitalists. Under capitalism this is created by removing the workers from their means of production and by paying them a wage which enables them to live. But surplus value was not produced under indentured production for two reasons: 1. labour power could not be offered for sale by the labourers whenever they liked, and 2. the wage that was paid was insufficient for them to live on; it was a wage in name only. But what was produced in Fiji was surplus product, produced through surplus labour and exchanged in the world markets for money which was used to reinvest in the means of production. Although I do not think that this surplus product produced through surplus labour under unfree conditions could be referred to as surplus value, others may disagree. For example Mandel says that surplus value is merely surplus product in money form (Mandel:1970).

Women's low wages represented a lower individual value for labour power. Their ninepence a day was supposed to reflect the work expected of them (i.e. three quarters of a man's task), but Marx' labour theory of value tells us that the wage does not pay for the work done. It pays for the reproduction costs of the individual which in every instance is lower than the value of the product. Women were paid less money, not because they were expected to complete fewer tasks, but because their costs of reproduction were supposed to be lower than that of men. Thus the exploitation of Indian women in the sugar industry in Fiji was always higher than that of men. This was exacerbated by their position as the reserve army of labour which meant they could become redundant at any moment. Their dependency on plantation production was also reinforced through coercion and violence.

The harshness of the Fiji plantation production process and the severity with which CSR officials dealt with their labourers was expressed in a lengthy memo written in 1896 by the Emigration Agent for Fiji A.C. Stewart in response to CSR acting manager in Fiji, E.W.M. Fenner's statement that the class of emigrants sent from India were below standard. Pointing out that the emigrants sent from India had passed two medical examinations, one of them in Fiji, Stewart argued that it was rather the treatment of labourers in Fiji that was the cause of their overwhelming debility and consequent early repatriation to India:

'To my mind there is, however, the...material question as to whether the Immigrants generally earn sufficient wages to keep themselves in health. I find from the Comparative Statement No VI...that in 1894, though the wages earned showed a very considerable improvement over previous years, of Male Labourers (presumably adults), only 79.6 per cent earned eightpence and over per working day, and of Female Labourers only 63.6 per cent earned five-pence and over per working day. It would seem probable that the remaining 24.4 percent of Male Labourers and 36.4 per cent of Female Labourers, if not aided by their employers, must of necessity have deteriorated in health and strength in a climate which is admittedly a trying one to the Indian Immigrant. As bearing on the question of the wages earned by Immigrants in the Colony I may state that of the 672 who returned by the "Erne"

this year, 217 were, to the best of my belief, entirely destitute-leaving aside those who died in Hospital after the arrival of the ship-and had to be provided with the means of proceeding to their homes. This is a very large proportion indeed, especially when it is considered that none of these 217 were suffering from senile decay, the large majority being in the prime of life' (Fiji Royal Gazette 1896 CP No 15 p 323).

The judgement about healthy individuals being sent to Fiji was made after a comparison with the inmates of the prison population of the Central Jail at Nagpur, Central Provinces, where the same class of emigrants as went to Fiji resided in the largest numbers. The supeintendent of the jail gave a list of figures detailing what the average height and weight of men of a certain age and class should be. This was used as a marker for the examination of coolies for Fiji in the following years. The surgeon superintendent of the ship "Erne" which returned reject coolies to India pointed out that the debility of the coolies in their first year in Fiji could be caused by the following:

'Houses, if they are not built on elevated and well-drained sites, or if necessary on the flat, are not upon piles allowing a free current of air beneath them and so avoiding as far as possible the influence of surface and ground water, if they are not well ventilated and have not sufficient cubic space per head for the number of inmates, and if they are not constructed of some fairly non-conductibng material; Food, if it is not suitable, moderate in price and easily procurable; The task, if it is not such as can be performed daily without undue muscular strain; if the pay is only a "living wage" and does not represent some part of the "surplus value" of the labourers' work, for a good coolie will save money if to do so he has to stint himself in food. Finally the inferences to be drawn from the considerations here submitted would seem to suggest that it is rather perhaps in the diseases and climate of Fiji than in any want of care in his examination in Culcutta that the cause of the Indian coolie's early breakdown and consequent repatriation is to be sought' (ibid).

The evidence in these documents which were published as a parliamentary paper, was damning. CSR was working its labourers too

hard, not paying them enough, and not providing adequate housing. Moreover it was recognised that surplus was being appropriated without much of it going back to the workers, even for food. The debility and incapacity of the returning workers proved that exploitation of the worst kind was going on.

During the years of indenture fewer women than men were repatriated to India, either by force or voluntarily. Women who were repatriated were either pregnant or nursing and without a breadwinner to look after them, or were part of other 'incapables' such as prostitutes, or riddled with venereal disease. Between 1892-6 the proportion of adult females to adult males among the repatriates was 40 per cent; and 31 per cent in 1912-16 (Gillion op cit p 193). Perhaps women could not return to India because they could not afford to pay the passage money. It may also be the case that many women became attached to certain men they were with and preferred to remain in Fiji. At the same time it is quite possible that having burnt their bridges in India women did not want to return, hoping for a better life once their indentures ended.

Summary

In this chapter I have argued that Indentured Indian women in Fiji were deliberately set up to fail at plantation work by colonial authorities who were faced with planter pressure to make available suitable male and female labourers for Fiji. The deliberate low proportion of women recruited for the plantation labour force meant that women were encouraged to form associations with men which interfered with their participation in the 'paid' workforce. Moreover, women's low wages and difficult tasks encouraged their further dissociation from sugar cane production. However, this did not mean that women were totally exempt from plantation work. As a surplus, floating pool of labour women were called upon frequently to labour in the fields. Their availability for plantation labour was however always affected by the assumption that they had domestic responsibilities, and by their frequent redundancies due to the presence of Indian men (both free and unfree) in ever increasing numbers.

The overtasking of women, their low wages and their constant withdrawal from paid work caused illness and poverty. When women refused to work even when they were commanded to do so they became the recipients of overseer and sirdar violence. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company of Australia attempted to monitor such acts of violence but often turned a blind eye and defended its plantation personnel in the interests of profit. Colonial state officials often censured the CSR Co personnel for their treatment of the women workers, but they too failed to take any real interest in their plight. Both sets of officials always believed women workers to be a nuisance, preferring to relegate them to the invisibility of the domestic arena.

But women workers were useful to capital. They commanded less wages, thus enhancing the profiteering of the CSR Co. They could be brought out to work during planting and harvesting and laid off during the slack season. This was reinforced by planters' beliefs that women were unsuitable for hard plantation labour and that not enough work could be found for them. Thus as indentured workers, women's labour was exploited through their ghettoisation into the reserve army', and through paying them less and working them harder. However the exploitation of women and the gains to CSR as a consequence of women's labour comprised more than the appropriation of their surplus labour in the fields. As will be shown in the next chapter planters also exploited women's femininity by compulsarily relegating them into the realm of domesticity.

CHAPTER 6 WOMEN AND WORK ON FIJI'S SUGAR PLANTATIONS- SEXUALITY AND DOMESTICATION

Women's involvement in waged work on plantations did not exclude them from domestication. In all the years of indenture women were able to carry out both paid and unpaid work. The previous chapter outlined some aspects of paid work of women. This chapter examines the other type of plantation work, that for which women were reputedly well-suited, i.e. domestic labour. It is argued that women's active participation in paid work was severely hampered by the expectation that as females they would service the men. This attitude, and the structural limitations imposed upon women in consequence, had the effect of encouraging and supporting compulsory domestication. Enforced domestication was experienced by all women on plantations, regardless of whether or not they generated an income.

In this chapter I discuss the domestication of plantation women in terms of the concept (re)production. I argue that in the domestic arena women maintained and serviced Indian and European men in the interests of plantation stability and individual profit. This servicing by women incorporated both a biological and sexual dimension which frequently affected women's ability to earn a living independently of men. As (re)producers women cooked, cleaned and provided sexual services for men. They also produced children for the future labour force of the Colony. As producers of children and maintainers of male labourers, women workers who were paid acted as a reserve army for domestic production.

The notion of 'reserve army' stems from Marxist Thought, and usually refers to the 'industrial' sphere. However, Marx did not work out this concept in detail and, although he used it in different senses, there was no clear distinction made between its varied uses (see Capital Vol 1 1954 pp 600-602). He described different types of active reserve army of labour required for capital accumulation- the floating workers who moved from one type of labour process to another, and the latent workers who were drawn into employment when an increase in the size of the working population was needed for an expanding economy. Further to

this, the reserve army concept was also used to refer to the pool of unemployed who had been made 'redundant' by the process of capital accumulation. Subsistence workers, for example, formed a latent pool of unemployed. The reserve army provided competition for those in employment by making it possible for the capitalists to effectively reduce the wages.

Recently, Marx' notion of the 'reserve' army has been used by feminists to refer to women (see for example Breugel 1979; Hill 1982). Feminists have argued that women, especially those who are married, can be drawn into the labour force when necessary, and removed when there is an economic crisis and the number of labourers employed have to be cut back. Capital accumulation is also aided by the possibility that women's work in the home can depress the level of wages, thus preventing men from pressing for an increase in pay. This thesis has been used with reference to specific industries and reveals the complex ways in which women's work in the home can have an effect on paid employment.

However there is little in the literature to indicate whether women can also act as a reserve army for production in the home. The idea that women in paid employment can be removed from public work and relegated to the private arena to maintain workers and produce children when the need arises for an expanding population is not in evidence in either the marxist or the feminist literature. In times of economic crisis it has been evident that women can be withdrawn from the paid work sphere to make place for men. It is also evident that women can be withdrawn from certain areas of paid work, and made to work for service industries, and thus act as a reserve army for other female workers (Hill *ibid*). But at certain historical periods, it is obvious that women can be also withdrawn from paid work because 'they are needed at home'. This was certainly the case during indenture in Fiji. Although women were paid workers, they were refused this work whenever male workers had to be produced and maintained. Thus paid women workers acted as a reserve army of labour for the domestic arena, and the CSR Company in Fiji expected that the domestic servicing of men and the production of babies for the future labour requirements on the plantations would be carried out by women.

Women's attitudes towards their enforced domestic servicing were affected by their own perceptions of work, autonomy and politics. Within the context of plantation production, many women could individually negotiate and bargain with men for relative freedom from oppression. This was often carried out through women's expressed sexuality, and by their ability to have children. It was thus possible for many to manoeuvre out of their financial and emotional dilemmas by various means. It was also possible for many women to negotiate with men on the basis of their earnings and in terms of the rules that stipulated that 'single' workers were more suited to plantation production than those who were married.

In order for women to be suitable plantation workers, several changes in the composition and quality of the labour force had to occur. First the workers had to be 'single', and second, they had to be versatile. Plantation production required the labour efforts of a large, simply skilled and docile labour force. For these requirements to be met, certain conditions had to apply in the selection of workers. The colonial authorities always insisted that single rather than married people should be taken for Fiji. But in India the availability of single workers in the numbers that the planters wanted was always (apart from the first year) in short supply, and during most of the years of indenture, CSR always faced a labour shortage (see AGI Reports 1888-1916). For this reason the labourers recruited had to be versatile. The men and women had to be able to undertake a variety of manual tasks, rather than be specialists. Eventually specialisation occurred but this was not until the twentieth century.

The structuring and planning of plantation production by those with capital investment in sugar cane in Fiji had particular effects on Indian women. The recruitment of single worker implied that marriage and a family were out of the question. This prohibited the formation of families. At the same time the shortages of adequate labour power compelled the officials to use the labour potential of workers regardless of sex. Thus the labouring qualities and specific expertise of all workers were to be put to use. In no sense could there be a wastage of workers considering the expense that had gone into their

introduction. The initial consequence of this was that there was a disintegration of formalised marriage, and the elimination of kinship. Single workers had no kin and marriage was made unpopular by the rules of the plantation prohibiting people from getting married without the permission of the manager. There was also a high marriage registration fee, discouraging Indians from declaring that they were married. The second effect of this was the enforcement of domestication of women. Even without marriage and kinship formation, women were forced into compulsory domestication. Skilled in housework, peasant production, childcare and rearing, women were expected to undertake this work for free. Within the plantation context men and women were expected to undertake field work as well as the tasks they were specifically qualified for- in women's case this was women's work in the 'home'.

The relegation of women into the domestic arena was achieved through two means: first, there was a marked wage and ration differential between women and men, and second there was the maintenance of the ideology of 'womanhood', which in most cases was reinforced by many Indian men and women themselves. As a consequence there was much contradiction in the lives of women workers. Women were faced with the double burden. As paid workers they worked in the fields, as unpaid workers they worked in the home. The tension was exacerbated by the inferior earning power of women. Their low wages gave them no other option but to endure enforced domestication.

But there was much resistance by the women to their enslavement. Many resolved the contradictions by refusing to service the men for free thus taking money for both housework and sex. Others took the option of serial monogamy, staying with a man only until his money ran out or they became bored. As has already been indicated, some others refused outright to service the men, preferring to live alone or in the extreme cases, commit suicide.

Women's resistance to enforced domestication was dealt with by men through violent means. This was expressed in all sorts of ways. Women were raped, sexually molested, murdered and exchanged for wealth or prestige. Women's resistance to their exploitation as the daily and generational maintainers of the plantation labour force was expressed

in terms of great complexity- it reflected the complex ways in which their surplus labour was appropriated for the purposes of the generation of wealth. This is described in the next chapter.

In general terms, this chapter shows that commonly understood notions of 'work' have to be extended, and furthermore that definitions of 'unfree' labour in colonial contexts must deal also with domestic productive activities of women. Domestic labour must be seen as an unfree relation of production because women are compelled to work for men to survive, and through the marriage obligation.

1. Daily Maintenance of the Labour Force

As 'housewives', even in a context where there was no legal category of 'wifhood', women were expected to maintain the men in terms of household tasks and sexual and emotional servicing. This took place despite the importation of 'single' women, and the weakening of Indian patriarchy upon the arrival of bonded labourers to Fiji. While the disintegration of kinship and rules of marriage were under severe threat in Fiji, this did not eliminate the practice of patriarchy, as the following discussion shows.

(i). The disintegration of kinship and 'single' women.

One of the most remarkable aspects of indenture was that mostly 'single' women registered as emigrants to the colonies. Women who contracted for Fiji defined themselves as 'single' women rather than as 'widows' or 'divorcees' as in Trinidad and other West Indian colonies. This was unusual because Indian women of the age that emigrated were hardly ever likely to remain unmarried after the age of 13 (Crooke op cit cited in Lal 1983 and Pearson notes in CSR F.4.0.2.15). Many explanations have been given for this discrepancy which include such things as 'runaway widows', 'abduction', 'runaway wives', and 'unusual mobility of young women due to the disintegration of traditional land tenure' (Lal op cit, Tinker op cit, Gillion op cit). All of these explanations are pertinent, for India's social affairs were in disarray at the time of transportation of indentured workers to Fiji and many commonly applied rules and regulations for the control and monitoring of women were probably quite relaxed.

Whatever the reason for women's emigration to Fiji, the most significant aspect of emigration was that this appearance of 'single' womanhood in depots and ships implied the freeing of the rules of kinship. Without the company of their relatives, women were not limited by prohibitions on sexual expression and free association with men. Depot marriages, if they occurred, were simple affairs, not requiring the services of priests or clansmen and women. Even under plantation conditions, the services of customary marriage celebrants such as priests or government marriage officials were usually dispensed with. Those who wished to cohabit with each other did so, and there were no sanctions compelling the couple to maintain their relationship for good. Under such circumstances the notion of 'marriage' and thus of kinship established through marriage (see Cucciari in the Introduction to this thesis) became immaterial. Men and women formed associations with each other on the basis of affection, lust, and resource pooling, and their decisions were made voluntarily and without the need for family, clan or caste approval. The notion of kinship that developed between the single Indian emigrants had little to do with marriage- rather, as has already been pointed out, it was on the basis of the association of 'jihazi-bhai', i.e. ship-mate brothers.

In the absence of kinship and marriage, which among Indians involved the assertion of male dominance through ritual and symbolism, there was the possibility that female subordination to Indian men within this context would not occur. There were many signs that traditional forms of male dominance were being weakened in the depots and plantations- without marriage into a family of clanspeople women were no longer compelled to do housework and rear children free. They also had the option to leave a man if they wished. There was no compulsory monogamy.

In Fiji this persisted. There is no doubt whatsoever that Indian male dominance was severely weakened among the emigrant class in Fiji. Indian men could scarcely exercise their male prerogative in a context where both men and women were in similar subservient positions as labourers. (1) Indian women's freedom from male dominance can be seen from the evidence of their more liberal attitude towards their

sexuality, which sometimes got them into trouble when they succumbed to venereal diseases. Many women formed loose sexual and probably monetary-based connections with men in the Indian depots and ships from which they later dissociated themselves, causing much anger and distress among the men. In one case 12 women refused to continue living with the men with whom they had co-habited with in India and on the ships (AGI Report for 1899), and in another case compensation had to be given to the husband of a woman who had left him to return to her first husband (AGI Report for 1893). Many women came to Fiji as single mothers, obviously willing and able to take care of their children themselves. (2)

Thus Indian male dominance was under threat from the disintegration of kinship rules of marriage. It was also under threat because of the lack of control of men over the material production of women. In the depots, all were of the same status. Personal wealth among labourers was scarce, and the ability to accumulate wealth through the appropriation of another person's labour, limited. In the absence of 'wives' among the single emigrants, women's labour could not be exploited by men. Thus the material circumstances surrounding the emigrants as they embarked upon their journey affected the commonly understood relations between men and women. Had everything else in the emigration scheme focussed on the individual rather than on collectivities ('gangs') based upon the exploitation of labour, the chances of a more egalitarian association between Indian women and men, based on a more sharing of resources, might have been constructed in Fiji.

However, the weakened state of male dominance was only temporary. It was not possible to totally eliminate male dominance due to two significant aspects of emigration which impinged upon the association between labourers. First, there was the wage and ration differential between women and men; and second, there was the matter of family emigration which ran parallel to single emigration. Both impacted upon the labourers in different ways, having the ultimate effect of negating single women's independence and reinforcing their dependency on men.

Male domination did not have to be reconstructed and reinforced on the basis of formalised marriage and structured kinship constructs. Even as formalised marriages were not permitted, the exploitation of women's labour continued unabated, ensuring the accumulation of wealth in the hands of men. This was achieved through both material and ideological means. Women faced different methods of extraction of their surplus labour. The consequence for women was both demoralising and liberating. It was demoralising because their exploitation by men continued to take place under changed circumstances, and it was liberating because these changed circumstances had the potential for women to achieve more control over the running of their own affairs. This was exercised by them even within the overall constraints of plantation production.

(ii). Women's pay, men's pay

For most of the years of indenture women were expected to complete three-fourths of men's tasks for the sum of ninepence, a task being defined as six to nine hours of steady work. The inequality between men and women was already structured in terms of payment: the tasks set for women and men constituted the same amount of time- men and women both worked for between six and nine hours (usually more) in order to complete their tasks. But women were paid three pence less 'for the tasks they finished'. The wages did not reflect the amount of work women did but the amount of money that planters thought they needed for their food requirements compared to men. As late as 1919 the CSR Co officials believed that women (along with children) needed less to eat than men: 'it is reckoned that an adult rice eater requires from 8 to 15 lbs a week, women and children somewhat less' (ABL 142/ 3109 Labasa Mill to General Manager, Sydney). This 'somewhat less' amounted to the difference in three pence daily between the wage awarded to men and that given to women. Thus the (re)production of the commodity female labour power was expected to be undertaken for less than the amount spent on the (re)production of male labour power.

The cheapness of women's labour was always recognised by employers, even those who employed white women in industries in England. Karl Marx pointed out in Capital Vol 1 that women were preferred to men in some areas of work because they were cheaper to maintain and usually

more dextrous (Marx Capital Vol 1 pp 504-506 and Marx et al in The Woman Question 1951 p 28). This meant that sometimes men lost their jobs to women, (e.g. in hauling canal boats in England), a cause of much resentment among the white men generally who actively sought to legislate against women working (see Humphries 1981 and Land 1980). Marx pointed out that women were cheaper to employ because the labour required to produce horses and machines was an accurately known quantity, while that required to maintain the women of the surplus population was below all calculation (Marx 1951 *ibid*).

Yet in Fiji, even though women were cheaper they were not favoured as workers. The evidence of their low work participation shows that they could not produce as much as men. Women may have been cheap, but their very cheapness interfered with their ability to 'produce'. This prevented planters from hiring women's labour just because it was cheap. Planters assessed both cheapness of labour power as well as product quantity when they hired workers. Men were not as cheap as women but they produced more at the end of the day and their work participation was much more regular.

While women and men were both employed as workers, men received more money for their reproduction costs than women. And since women earned less, they could accumulate less than men. Within the overall plantation hierarchy men were more advantaged in terms of their access to resources than women, thus ensuring their continued dominance over women. The dominance of men had come under threat in the depots and ships because of the disintegration of marriage and kinship. However the very organisation of plantation production, with its emphasis on cost control, permitted the reconstruction of male superiority on the basis of the 'wage'. The industrial planter deliberately favoured the Indian men over Indian women, thus limiting women's ability to challenge all of male authority. This had several effects on women. Many succumbed to male dominance by becoming dependent on the male wage. Others refused to permit advantages to men by challenging the notion of 'marriage' and kinship formation. Women could not question men's ability to earn more wages than themselves but they could challenge its consequence in the area of 'marriage' and the family. Even in terms of their limited earnings some women could become

relatively independent. They could amass some money (through various means), and this could then enter the conjugal fund of those who became associated with men. Moreover as independent earners women were also able to withdraw their funds once they left their partners. Sometimes they had to buy their freedom from men, as in the case of Sukwanti who wrote to the governor in 1913 complaining of her treatment by her former husband whom she had paid off several years previously:

'When we didn't agree I paid him twelve pounds and ten shillings cash and eighteen pounds worth of jewellery and then he signed the undermentioned agreement made by my solicitor Mr Crompton, who informed me that I was free from my husband. But now he wishes to take possession of my property and claims to be my husband. I beg you to instruct the police to guide me from (my husband's) clutch. I have worked very hard to save the few pence I own. And I would be completely ruined and starving if my property be claimed...'

The Colonial Secretary refused to interfere on the grounds that the matter was before the court. However the Agent General of Immigration sympathetically responded that the agreement to terminate the relationship had been legal and her former husband could not claim Sukwanti's property (CSO MP 2384/13). In this case Sukwanti could challenge male claim over her property by paying off her former husband and dissolving the marriage. Many such challenges took place. Other women challenged the dominance of Indian men by refusing to be faithful only to them. For instance, in 1890 an indentured woman, Mahadai ran off with Sincharan after living with another man, Kasaba for three weeks. Before she left, Kasaba took all her belongings, arguing that Mahadai was his and he would not let her go to another man. Giving evidence in court after she had been beaten by a Fijian man hired by Kasba, Mahadai said, 'I cannot understand this, because at Nausori I stayed with two men and they never made a fuss when I left them. I stayed after that with a Madrassi who never objected when I left him, and then again with Mr Berry's washerman, Thakurdas, who also took kindly to my leaving him' (CSO MP 555/1890). In another case, in 1912, an indentured male, Shiucharan wrote to the governor, pointing out that his 'woman' of five years (on whom he had spent

about 150 pounds), had left him, 'with 40 pounds cash and 30 pounds worth of jewellery and gone to a European house to work and I see her driving some nights with a white man and I went to see her to ask for my property and the peoples of the house chase me away. We Indian peoples often getting troubles through often this womens way they behave. I hope your excellency will tell me what to do to obtain my property'. Shiucharan later attempted to commit suicide but this had no effect on his former 'wife' who informed him through the Inspector General of the Constabulary that her 'husband' could do what he liked with his life as she was no longer interested in him (CSO MP 8226/12).

It was the earnings of women that placed a tremendous strain on the relationship between women and men. Their earnings could make them free of servitude and bondage to men. But women were not permitted to be totally free from the material exploitation of their labour as women, and they were also bound by the ideology of domestication. This was reinforced by the existence of family emigration to Fiji. Although few in number, the families that arrived in Fiji reproduced the ideology of wifhood and motherhood. This had serious repercussions on the autonomy of 'single'women.

(iii). The 'family' as an ideal.

The permanency of the relationship between wives and husbands within families served as the standard against which 'morality' on plantations could be measured both by the Indians themselves and by the colonial authorities. Although many of these families had 'depot' marriages which disintegrated upon arrival in Fiji, others were migrants who had travelled as family units from their villages in India itself (Lal: 1983 p 115-116). Altogether 7185 adults arrived in the Colony accompanied by their spouses. Of them 3,526 were males (11.2 per cent of the total male population), and 3,659 females (26.7 per cent of the total female population) (ibid). The discrepancy is explained by the fact that some men were accompanied by more than one wife, although there were few women who had more than one husband (ibid). In all, just over 4,600 indentured families travelled to Fiji from north India (ibid). Most of them were families comprising of husband and wife only (68.6 per cent), while others were composed of parents and children (13.9 per cent). Mothers and their children

constituted 11.3 per cent, fathers and their children 1.3 per cent, and others (undefined by Lal), 4.9 percent (ibid p 117). Most of the emigrants were not of the joint family type prevalent in rural India, although the ones which were represented consisted of an older female relative (such as a mother or aunt), or a male relative such as a cousin (ibid). The joint family was most prevalent among tribals and lower caste Hindus in the first ten years of indenture to Fiji, although the largest number of families (58.3 per cent of all families) emigrated in 1908, the year of famine and food scarcity in the United Provinces (ibid p 118). Most conjugal and nuclear families emigrated after the turn of the century, whereas most single parent families arrived in Fiji in the first few years of indenture (ibid). The single parent families were not wanted by the planters who complained to the government about 'uneconomic families' (ibid and AGI Report for 1899). The government officials agreed to the request to lower the proportion of women arriving with their children, asking the Emigration Agent for fewer families (AGI Report for 1899 ibid). Fiji Government's echo of the planters' request was not surprising considering its dependence on planters for the Colony's income.

Of all the families, mixed caste families were fewest in number, comprising 5.4 per cent of all the families (ibid p 127). Most of these were conjugal families whose members had probably left their home districts because they were unable to get married there (ibid). But the majority were people who had married in their villages and had emigrated as family units. On the ships and the plantations they remained as family units, withstanding the pressure of plantation social life to fragment this unusual collectivity. This tenacity of the family collectivity during indenture had particular repercussions for single women's ability to challenge male dominance.

The emigrant families tended to retain the commonly understood family structure which had origins in India. This encompassed the authority of the male, which was reinforced by religious leaders and 'free' men who visited Fiji periodically, often in the company of several wives. The standards of 'tradition and culture' that these men transmitted and upheld in Fiji were often used to condemn, dismiss and label as 'prostitution' the activities of women who were, through various

means, challenging male authority. In 1913 for example, the Governor received three petitions from free 'Bombay' men in Lautoka and Suva which urged him to examine the disproportion of women to men in the labour force, arguing that this led to sexual jealousy and murders on plantations. In the petition, signed by 21 of them, the Indian men wrote: '..this DISPROPORTION is mostly responsible for the abnormal number of murders and kindred crimes among the Indians.. the majority of those found guilty of such crimes are otherwise quiet and law-abiding and the murders, for which they are condemned to death, are not due to any murderous instinct in them but really due to sexual jealousy, a legitimate and honourable instinct by itself' (my emphasis). The men advised that the murderers be sent off to the Solomon Islands instead of being executed, pointing out that the fault of the crimes on the plantations lay with the system of indenture itself (CSO MP 1626/13, 1710/13, 1712/13). In 1918, philanthropist, missionary and Gandhi's friend C.F. Andrews also after a visit to Fiji recommended to the government that 'family' rather than single emigration was more suitable because of the inability of women to undertake their wifely duties as in India. He argued that marriage, so central to the Indian way of life, was impossible in Fiji where women were like 'rudderless vessels with broken masts' drifting on the rocks and where they passed from one man to another with no sense of shame (Andrews and Pearson 1916 and 1918 Part 2 pp 36-37). Thus family emigration, and the 'purity' of women who were within the family structure in Fiji, were upheld as models for women without husbands.

This served to make the distinction between 'good' and 'bad' women. Good women were those who were married and had children with their husbands, did housework and were involved in religious duties (Andrews *ibid*), whereas bad women were those who flaunted their sexuality, refused to be married to one man, had children out of wedlock, and ran their own affairs. Even if women were not 'prostitutes' in the strict sense of the term they were labelled as such, leading many individuals into defining the Fiji plantations as 'brothels', and the women as 'alley cats' (see for example Gill *op cit*). (3)

The question of 'morality' of women was raised by many who visited the plantations and observed the activities of both women and men.

Sometimes 'immorality' threatened even the 'free' family social formation. When C.F. Andrews and W.W. Pearson visited Fiji in 1916 and again in 1917 they were told by an Indian man that the morals of the coolie lines sometimes extended to the 'free' Indian population. Divorces were common and it was not unusual for a father to sell his daughter to one man, allowing the betrothal ceremony to be performed, and then sell her to another. One Indian man pointed out mournfully: 'Sahib... our women have lost all shame; they change their husbands as they change their dress' (Andrews and Pearson op cit p 33). Andrews was appalled at being told that women left their husbands for the sake of jewellery and went to live with other men. 'They seemed to do just what they pleased, and to live just as they liked. Castes and religions were mixed together in a common jumble. Hindu girls were sold in marriage to Mahomedans and vice versa' (ibid). Andrews reported that some people had described the condition of the sexes in the coolie lines of Fiji as the 'morals of the poultry yard', with which he agreed (ibid). He also argued that the disproportion of women would not voluntarily be put right if left to the planters:

'Thus, the low proportion of indentured women is not something accidental, which can be abandoned without modifying the system. Rather it is an integral factor in the system itself, which apart from this paucity of women, could not be run at high profits required by the employers. The moment we suggested to the planters in Fiji such reforms as would help to make a decent family life possible among the coolies, we were met on all sides with the word "impossible". The expense they declared would be prohibitive' (ibid p 28).

Andrews heard of one estate where the overseer made a regular practice of allotting so many men to each single woman. In horror Andrews exclaimed that this amounted to regulated prostitution (ibid p 29).

Andrews did not of course put the blame wholly on the plantations for this. He argued that prostitution of women had not originated in Fiji itself. The system of recruitment was also at fault. Since women were required by law to come to Fiji in a certain proportion, many who arrived were unsuitable: 'it has been found exceedingly difficult to obtain in India even as many as forty women for each hundred men,

without drawing largely on the prostitute class'. Andrews was reportedly told by the planters that the system of indenture 'could not go on without them' (ibid p 29). Andrews alleged that the 'moral evil in Fiji appears to have gone much deeper (than in other colonies such as Natal)' (ibid).

In 1918, in an effort to pressure the government and the CSR officials to introduce a 'better class of woman' (ie those who were accompanied by their husbands and children), Andrews made arrangements for a female missionary, representing several Australasian Women's Organisations, to visit Fiji and report on the conditions of Indian labourers. Florence Garnham arrived in May and toured the plantations. In her report she assessed social and moral conditions, pointing out that plantation 'lines' were unsuitable for family living, each apartment of 10 ft by 12 ft being set aside for either three single labourers, or a family of two parents and not more than two children (Garnham 1918 p 13). They were filthy and overcrowded, a den of vermin and vice, not conducive to the rearing of children. She also criticised the decision to allow 'free' men to also live in the 'lines'. She argued that this was advantageous to men for they had access to free accommodation, free water and sanitary arrangements, but this also encouraged them to deliberately live close to the wives of other men with whom they frequently formed sexual and emotional associations (ibid). Garnham argued that on plantations moral interests were evidently sacrificed for money in the way that family emigration was discouraged: 'It is just here that the greatest mistake was made for clearly the introduction of families would have obviated much of the evil of Fiji to-day' (ibid p 18).

In this aspect, Andrews, Pearson and Garnham all saw the moral evils arising from the absence of family life. They argued that if women could not be 'wives and mothers' in families then the result was 'evil immorality'. To eliminate this they favoured reconstruction of family and kinship so that women could be guided and their behaviour monitored. As Andrews said, under plantation conditions women could do 'just as they liked' (Andrews op cit p 33). For these philanthropists, the indenture system was evil because it discouraged family emigration, not because it was exploitative in terms of the

overtasking and underpaying of all workers, regardless of sex. They were more concerned about the inability of the women to be 'mothers' and 'wives' an ideal in Victorian times. Andrews and others were perhaps quite aware that plantation women were challenging male authority in a variety of ways and their impressions were reinforced by the unhappy complaints of Indian men. The solution for all of them was to make conditions appropriate for the restructuring of employment practices so that women could take care of their 'duties' in the home.

Thus, male dominance, which could be challenged by women on the basis of first, their ability to freely associate with men as 'single' women, and second, their earnings or potential earnings, was constituted on plantations through the payment of less wages to women and through the celebration of the ideal 'family' which was constructed on the basis of male authority and religious sanctions applying to women, thus indicating that women workers were significant in plantation production in different ways than men. While women had the potential to challenge Indian male dominance on the plantations, they were not overwhelmingly effective because of the combination of male interests which ensured that Indian women would continue to be subordinate to Indian men. But the confinement of women into the realm of female subordination was not achieved through structural conditions and rules alone. It was also achieved through the use of violence on the part of white and Indian men, and through enforced domestication, relegating women to reproductive tasks on the plantation itself. This necessary use of violence reflected women's resistance as much as men's desire to control. If the feminine ideal was not an effective attraction to women, then violence and compulsory domestication were to be used to remind Indian women of their responsibilities.

(iv). Anti-woman violence on plantations

In the previous chapter I pointed out that violence against women workers took the form of physical assaults for failure to complete a task or for offences such as lack of diligence, failure to obey orders and defying authority. These forms of physical violence on the part of the plantation personnel were targetted at women as paid workers rather than at women as a sex. However, other forms of violence, which were specific to women, were also in evidence on the plantation and

served to remind indentured women that they were bonded women rather than just bonded servants.

Indian women on plantations were reminded of their subordination to men in two ways: first, they were the targets of sexual assault and rape on the part of European and Indian men. Second, they were victims of murder. Indian men killed women for challenging male dominance in matters of sex and cohabitation. As victims of both types of physical and emotional violence women were reminded that their sexuality was to be controlled, and that their claim to autonomy over their lives and over their bodies could very easily be wrested from them. The incidences of woman-specific violence revealed very clearly that despite women's ability to earn their living independent of men, they were still regarded as men's property. For European men, Indian women were property twice over, as women and as bonded workers. As such they could be 'taken' with impunity.

a. Rape

The rape and molestation of women was not confined to the plantations. This was a threat to female autonomy from the time of their embarkation to Fiji. As early as 1882, it was reported by the AGI that, despite close monitoring of Indian women and men on the ships, the second mate on one of the immigrant ships was in the habit of raping women in the hold at night. It was recommended to the Colonial Secretary that some penalty be attached to such acts (CSO MP 82/2186). After this incident there were no other reports in the documents of the women being interfered with by ships' crew.

On the plantations there were only a few reports of rape of Indian women by non-Indian men, although this does not necessarily mean that such rapes took place only rarely. Within the violent plantation context where everyone believed that women were 'immoral' there was little chance that complaints of rape would be heeded. Nevertheless, in 1899 a charge was laid against a European male but, subsequently, two Indian men and two Indian women were charged and convicted for conspiracy. It appeared that the original allegation of rape had been false (AGI Report for 1899 p 23).

Other complaints could not be ignored by the authorities however. CSR officials rarely concerned themselves with women's allegations and only requested a report if the colonial authorities urged an investigation into a criminal activity of this nature. Only infrequently were charges laid against white men. In 1903 for example, overseer J.M. Sutton was fined one shilling for 'assaulting' a woman. The woman (unnamed) had accused the overseer of 'asking to have connection with her'. The woman refused and he assaulted her, thus being charged with attempt to rape as well as assault. In his report to the General Manager in Sydney, the manager of Labasa which employed both the overseer and the woman said that the woman had refused to work, striking Sutton's horse when he insisted that she carried on with her work. Sutton had struck her in anger at this disobedient behaviour. There was certainly no intention to rape (ABL 142/3083 Fiji In). In this case there was no doubt that the overseer would be believed, the woman 'being of immoral character (ibid).

Perhaps the most famous case of attempted rape was that of Kunti in 1913. Kunti, who had the reputation of giving trouble on her plantation, was sent alone to weed an isolated banana patch in Rewa. Later that day Overseer Cobcroft came to inspect her work, grabbed her and 'made improper suggestions' (Lal 1985a p 55). She screamed, ran towards a river and threw herself in the water. She was saved from drowning by the quick action of a young boy who rescued her (ibid). Kunti's story appeared in several of the Indian newspapers setting off a campaign to stop Indian emigration on the grounds that women were being degraded in Fiji. The investigation that resulted concluded with the allegation of the AGI and the planters that Kunti had made up the entire story, and that she was of immoral character (ibid p 56). In his report of the case the AGI also denied that indentured immigrants were cruelly treated by overseers and planters (ibid).

While European officials attempted to ignore and suppress the allegations of rape by white men, Indian men took matters into their own hands. They punished the white men who 'interfered' with their women. Indian men were less likely to take up the defence on behalf of women if they had been assaulted for failure to complete tasks or for giving cheek. The definition of women as their property protected

women only from sexual assault. But this definition sometimes interfered with the white man's idea that he owned everything and everyone on the plantation, with grave consequences. In 1916 Overseer Kemp was murdered by Ramkissun an indentured labourer. Kemp had allegedly raped Ramkissun's 'wife' Mangri in the bushes near his house, and then again in his own kitchen. When Mangri told Ramkissun about the rape, alleging that Kemp wished to continue having sex with her without making a monetary arrangement (as was the practice), Ramkissun attacked Kemp with a cane knife. Kemp later died of his wounds and Ramkissun pleaded insanity. CSR Co, in whose employ Kemp had been, attempted to prevent the appointment of an impartial solicitor to the case by paying its own lawyer Davidson to defend Ramkissun. Upon the discovery of this, the AGI told the Colonial Secretary that, although Davidson was supposed to defend Ramkissun, in reality he had been told to prevent certain questions being asked in case 'the much dreaded women question should crop up and thereby bring out the evidence of a nature damaging to the company and reflecting on the conduct of one of its officers and perhaps endanger their prospects of obtaining further supplies of labour'. Despite this attempt at a cover-up however, evidence quickly emerged from the witnesses that Kemp had been in the habit of raping women on his plantation. This was often carried out with the approval of the women's lovers as long as he gave money or food as compensation. Head Sirdar, Charaja, giving evidence also said that Kemp was always interfering with the women, but another woman, Rajamma defended Kemp, arguing that he was a 'good sahib'. However, it was Mangri's own evidence that was the most illuminating. She told the court that after the rape she would have agreed to continuing sexual relations with Kemp, but he had refused to make an arrangement with her Indian lover and had refused to pay her (C 61/1916). In terms of the unwritten plantation rules, Kemp had died because he had been unable to make proper arrangements with one Indian man regarding the use of his property (Mangri). In this case Kemp believed that the woman he had raped belonged to him. Kemp's idea about his superiority as a white boss interfered with the general rules of plantation patriarchy, and this misreading of the rules led to his death.

The Vancouver-Fiji Sugar Company of Navua had its own share of scandals, one of which led the Europeans of the district to write a petition to the Governor on behalf of a European officer who had been accused of attempting to rape an Indian woman by the name of Bhuri (CSO MP 5454/13). Bhuri had accused A.W. Dunne of attempted rape, and his senior officer, C.A. Drury, of assault. Although Drury pleaded guilty to assault, it was believed by other white men in the colony that he had hit the woman under severe provocation. In a letter of support to the Colonial Secretary, the manager of the Vancouver-Fiji Sugar Co urged leniency in the court's treatment of Drury (he was eventually fined one pound and scolded by the magistrate), pointing out that he had much experience as an officer of the company and that the woman Bhuri was of bad character. Writing to the Stipendiary Magistrate who had handled the case the manager offered the opinion that 'the case was a conspiracy to provoke Mr Drury and charge Mr Dunne', and that neither of the men could be held responsible.

In the court Bhuri's own evidence had been damning. She accused Dunne of making 'immoral suggestions' to her as she carried water to the men in the fields. When the Indian men in the gang, hearing her complaints, asked Dunne if he had called Bhuri for immoral purposes, Dunne denied it. He then returned to where Bhuri was and beat her. A little later Drury arrived and also beat Bhuri with a whip until she became unconscious. Bhuri called witnesses to prove her case and it was difficult for the Stipendiary Magistrate to counter the evidence of 15 men who had watched the assault by Drury but not the attempted rape nor the beating that Dunne was supposed to have administered. The charges against Dunne were dismissed but not against Drury who, apart from being fined, also faced dismissal from his job. The Europeans of the area gathered in support of Drury. They wrote petitions and letters, claiming that the woman Bhuri was of bad character and, in support of this, they got both Dunne and the local hospital superintendent to write sworn statements about her character. Hospital superintendent Andrews wrote that Bhuri was 'indifferent, insulting and indilligent....of bad reputé generally and (caused) endless trouble in the field. I find on reference to the hospital records that she has been an applicant to this institution on sixteen occasions during the past eighteen months'..being admitted to the hospital for

diarrhoea and gonorrhoea (among other things). He also accused her of malingering' (ibid). Dunne's statement followed along similar lines. He accused the woman of being of bad character and also a bad influence on others for she taught other women and men to resist authority and neglect their work. 'In the lines her moral character is that of a common prostitute and here again her influence is used to lead the younger and weaker women into the paths of prostitution...' (ibid) Although all the petitioners begged the Colonial secretary to reconsider his decision to dismiss Drury from his position as overseer, he was unable to overturn the decision of the court, suggesting instead that Drury could get other employment as long as it did not involve taking responsibility for Indian labourers (ibid).

In this case, although the men involved were not employed by the CSR Co, all matters relating to sugar production and relations of production were of interest to the CSR managers who kept their own files of the case. Information of this sort was significant for working out the appropriate defence for those European officers who were unlucky enough to get caught illtreating the women. Evidently an appropriate defence in such matters was the accusation of the immorality of the women which could be used to sidestep accusations of sexual molestation, attempted rape and rape. This only applied when women were brave enough to report such incidents. Most women let the assaults and insults go past without complaints.

The rape of Indian women by European men did not lead to complaints on the part of the women for several reasons: first, the women were frightened to accuse overseers or managers of rape due to their class position on the plantations. As labourers they could not jeopardise their future position as workers. An allegation of rape could make the life of an Indian woman miserable. She may be set harder tasks, or not paid for the tasks completed. Since the plantation was a closed community there would have been little she could do to complain. Thus women would have learnt to cope with rape either by ensuring that the opportunity for rape never presented itself by confining their activities to the domestic arena, or by not reporting if it occurred. Secondly, women would have been aware of their vulnerable position as women. The term 'rape' would have been eliminated from their

vocabulary altogether and rather than running away from European men who had power over their livelihood, they would have turned the situation to their advantage by taking money, jewellery, or easier tasks for sex. In the case of Mangri above, she was raped first, and then she asked for money when it appeared that Kemp was likely to make a habit of it. Bartering their sex would have permitted women some control over their bodies. By doing this they may have avoided becoming the victims of rape. As women of colour, Indian women were aware of their powerlessness viz-a-viz European men. Only those who were exceptionally brave, or those who were married would have dared to accuse white men of rape. Additionally, white men would not have defined their rape of Indian women as a crime. Similar to the white overseers and plantation owners in the West Indies and the American South, white men in Fiji considered that they had absolute power over their employees during their term of service. As such the rape of women would have been defined as part of 'normal' behaviour within the overall plantation production context.

Thus the rape of Indian women by white men involved several dimensions of power: first, the women were workers whose labour power had been bought under a condition of bonded servitude, giving rights to white men to use it as they pleased; second, women were females and as such they were always potential targets of sexual violence; and third, the women were black and as such they were victims of racist double-standard as well. The sexual and racist double-standard applied to women in terms of their position as black workers and as black women. The whites' views of the alleged rampant sexuality of black people was based on the idea that blackness was associated with animalism. This bias put tremendous constraints on women who wished to complain about their treatment. It was unlikely that their voices would be heard for everyone believed that they were immoral, and that therefore they could not be 'raped'. Nevertheless the few cases that were reported were investigated thoroughly because officials were anxious that no hint of scandal would jeopardise the import of labour.

The same scrutiny also applied if a woman accused an Indian man of rape. In the records, between 1885 and 1920 i.e. a period of 35 years, 46 charges of rape were laid against Indian men (Naidu op cit p 70).

Altogether 99 men were involved in these offences although charges were not laid against all those under suspicion. Of those men more directly involved 47 were convicted, and the rest either not prosecuted or acquitted (ibid). In 1912, as a consequence of the abduction and rape of a female minor by a man who had, according to plantation customary procedure, been betrothed to her, a charge of abduction and rape was laid. The case was brought to the attention of the Attorney General by the Stipendiary Magistrate who had to deal with the matter in court because the parents had accused the man of taking the girl (Dukhani) against their will. The Attorney General referred the case to the Colonial Secretary for attention and advice. It appeared that Dukhani had been betrothed to Hublal ('free' Indian), but instead of waiting he had abducted her with 'intent to carnally know her' against her parents' will. In putting the case to the Colonial Secretary the Attorney General pointed out that at the hearing the 'question was raised as to whether an Indian immigrant, betrothed to an Indian girl according to Hindu custom, is placed in lawful possession of the girl'. If the girl was legally Hublal's then he could not be charged with abduction and rape. The Colonial Secretary refused to give an answer to this legal point, arguing that such decisions were to be made by the Stipendiary Magistrates (CSO MP 7526/12). In this case the crime was reported only because the parents were anxious to protect their asset, for a girl child could command much wealth in the form of brideprice. It was also unlikely that Hublal would have been seen to have committed a crime if it could be proved that the girl 'belonged' to him.

Rape was the most extreme form of sexual violation on the plantations. Apart from rape there were many incidents of sexual molestation, much of which also went unreported. Between 1885 and 1920 only seven charges of indecent assault were laid, involving the conviction of 19 people (Naidu op cit p 70). Other 'sexual offences' included carnal or attempted carnal knowledge of a girl under 13, buggery, bestiality, sodomy and harbouring a married woman (ibid). Most of the sexual crimes were targetted at women and often involved abduction as well as rape and unlawful carnal knowledge of a female minor.

While rape of a minor drew the attention of the colonial authorities, the rape of adult women hardly went noticed, and were not reported even though managers of plantations were compelled by law to report such allegations by women. In 1913, Muni, of a Rewa plantation complained that one Mahley had raped her. Although the woman had a witness and had reported the rape to her sirdar and then to her manager, no action had been taken. When this came to the attention of the AGI, he questioned the manager who told him that he had asked the woman to report the rape to the police and to the court but she had not done so. Since he had been busy he could only report the crime six days later. The manager also disagreed that the woman had been raped, arguing that it had been attempted rape only as the man had run away when the witness appeared on the scene. The AGI warned the manager never to ignore this type of complaint, threatening to prosecute him if it happened again (CSO MP 1319/1913).

Rape or the threat of rape could always be used by men to control and monitor women's sexuality or independence on plantations. As in the cases cited above, rape often accompanied assaults of other kinds. In the minds of women the different types of assaults they were subjected to were linked even though some were targetted at them because of their sex while others were handed out because they were black workers. Indian men attacked women too but these were rarely reported for two possible reasons: first the women may have been reluctant to cause divisions between themselves and the Indian men in a context where both were bonded; and secondly, they may have been frightened of Indian male violence which was articulated in the actual killing of women who transgressed. Indian men had the reputation of murdering Indian women on Fiji's plantations.

b.The killing of Indian women.

The indiscriminate killing of Indian women by Indian men on plantations has been referred to in the literature on Fiji (Naidu op cit; Ali op cit; Lal 1985 a and b). Between 1890 and 1919 68 indentured women were murdered as opposed to only 28 men (Lal 1985a p 60). The murder of women has been explained by the authors dealing with this 'problem' in two ways: first as the fault of women themselves (Naidu ibid and Ali op cit), and secondly as the fault of

the 'system' of indenture which was acknowledged to be tinged with Indian patriarchy (Lal op cit). Neither of the perspectives has properly located the reason for the murders within the patriarchal industrial plantation itself which easily accommodated the Indian male claims to dominance. This slippage in the literature has so far had the effect of explaining anti-woman violence in terms of the failure of family and kinship which could have provided a 'haven' for labourers, ignoring the possibility that what was a 'haven' for men may not have been the case for women.

The various Agents General of Immigration dealing with the frequency of crimes against women generally blamed the murders on the scarcity of women and the low caste status of the emigrants (AGI Reports 1885-1916). Rarely did they point out that the plantation conditions had the consequence of encouraging violent behaviour on the part of all who lived with this environment. Initially the murders of women were hardly questioned at all. It was only when important Indians in India began asking questions that this crime against women was delved into by the authorities. Eventually the blame was placed firmly on the absence of marriages and religion on the plantations and on the 'natural' immorality of all Indians. Individual planters were exempt from all blame.

Contemporary scholars dealing with indenture echoed the sentiments of the AGIs. Scholars such as Naidu (op cit) and Ali (op cit) maintained that women asked to be killed by taking advantage of their scarcity value on the plantations by leaving one man for another, or by willingly having sex with several men at the same time. Quite apart from the fun they appeared to have had in the process, they were also able to accumulate funds which served as the basis of their wealth. Indian men were unable to cope with women's 'promiscuity' and killed women out of jealousy and unhappiness. Many men frequently committed suicide as well. Thus women were to blame for their own murders and for the suicide of their men. Men's izzat or honour was being affected by women's dalliances. This is a sexist view which denies the historicity and diversity of women's experiences as workers.

The alternative view, that the failure of kinship, family structure and religion caused alienation among men which made them attack women (Lal op cit) is no less sexist. In this view it also appears that privacy in the lines was eradicated so that relationships developed between married women and single men which led to the murder of the women by jealous husbands (ibid p 63). This situation was seen to be exacerbated by the failure of family structure due to the non-recognition of traditional rites of marriage (until the turn of the century) on the part of the authorities (ibid).

It is impossible to see how women could have taken advantage of their scarcity value to such an extent that it caused their own deaths. Located as they were within the plantation hierarchy, women could not have the power to 'take advantage' of their scarcity value. They were operating within the constraints of racism and sexism as plantation workers and were more likely to be caught up in situations rather than actively seeking sexual advantage. The organisation of women on plantations involved the allocation of their labour (as women workers) evenly for the use of men. Many women resisted male advances but were forced against their will to submit. But the plantation system cannot be blamed totally either. Although men were as much the victims of plantation production as women, they cannot be treated with pity and sympathy, and the system with anger. Men were attempting to exercise their male dominance even within the overall exploitative relations of plantation production.

In my view, the murders of women can be blamed neither on the women themselves, nor on the plantation system as such. In terms of the notion of 'scarcity value' this is particularly problematic. Women were constrained by the plantation structure and were not in total command of their sexuality to be able to 'peddle' it effectively nor to take advantage of it all the time, thus causing the poor male victims to kill them. In terms of plantation production the structuring and allocation of the female labour force limited the earnings of women forcing them to look towards a range of men for survival; there was no point in staying with a man if he could not afford to support one when there were many others of more attractive personalities and pockets around. In 1912 for example, Maharajia was

killed by her former lover Ghazi who accused her of taking a new lover while Ghazi was in gaol (CSO MP 6979/1912). Also in 1913 Nur Bux (Nur Buksh) attacked his lover Tamizan with a knife, a pair of scissors and a hoe after she told him she was leaving him for another man. She later died in hospital (CSO MP 3779/13). Men killed women because they could not cope with women's ability to utilise their resources independently of individual males, whether these resources were in the form of sexuality, earnings or children. Some women did leave their husbands to live with other men, either because they fell in love or because they wished for a better financial future for themselves and their children. If this can be called 'taking advantage' of one's sex, then women had every right to do this- they were struggling to claim their own bodies and their own sexuality. It was this struggle that was problematic for men. Hitherto, women's sexuality, earnings and children had belonged to them. The ideology of Hinduism (as well as Islam) had for centuries relegated the ownership of women to men. It was extremely difficult for individual men to give up this ownership, and many lost control and killed women.

This is not to say that women did not kill men. Several women collaborated with their new husbands or lovers to kill their former husbands because they realised they could not escape from their enslavement by any other means. This was the situation of Papamma who was found guilty of killing Venkataramia in 1913. She was initially sentenced to hang but this was later commuted to life imprisonment (CSO MP 1416/13).

It was not the women themselves who are to be blamed for their own murders, nor of the failure of kinship and family. The lack of family and kinship rules actually liberated women from their previous subordinate position as property of men in India. Kinship and the family, through the ritual of marriage, had actually defined and reinforced the position of women as property. Within the indentured plantation production unit this restriction was weakened. It was men's inability to deal with the lifting of such rules for the confinement and ownership of women that caused murders of women and suicides of men. It must be noted that there were few female suicides. Had alienation on the plantation really been a problem, there would have

been many female suicides as well for deculturation would have affected everyone, not just men. In actuality women had always been the keepers and followers of religious principles, yet on plantations, the failure of such institutions seemed to have negatively affected men only. There is no doubt that violence against women by men was caused by the loosening of the principles of patriarchy. In the absence of other kin and clan sanctions, men attempted to reconstitute patriarchy through violence. The murder of women was not just punishment for those who had transgressed. It was also a warning to those who were thinking of it.

Despite this, accused women refused to accept responsibility for the problems of men. To the contrary they continued living and working as they wished, and were defiant of all male authority. In consequence, the murders of women and suicides of men continued throughout the period of indenture, creating problems for the officials who had to explain these incidents of violence to colonial authorities in Britain and India. By 1916 the news of the murders had the effect of encouraging anti-indenture sentiments in India. McNeill and Chimman Lal's visits in 1913 and that of Andrews a few years later had the effect of publicising, in a somewhat sensational manner, the 'evils' of the indenture system which 'caused' the murders of women and suicides of men. Their reports were condemned by interested parties (such as the CSR Co) in Fiji, although individual medical officers who had, over the years, been in a position of gaining first-hand impressions of plantation conditions and their effect on human lives were not so critical. In 1918 for example Dr Harper, who had had 14 years of medical experience in the colony, stated that he was aware that women had to service the men and that the assaults were a consequence of this (C159/18). Harper's opinions were highly unpopular with Fiji officials and many statements were made denying that the 'moral' conditions on the plantations were abysmal. The officials were anxious that adverse publicity would not reach India. Andrews' report also had the effect of angering the Methodist Mission Society of Australasia which had, since the late 1800s, attempted to undertake social work in Fiji with the aim of converting Indians (and Fijians) to Christianity. Individuals within the MMSA had already criticised the system in 1914, although this was suppressed in the discussions

after Andrews visits. The Reverend R. Piper, an important official of the MMSA in Fiji, had written a letter to the Calcutta Statesman pointing out that the system was 'essentially bad' and should be radically altered or abolished without delay (MMSA M/33 Folder 1). Piper's description of the murders on the plantations were vivid: 'the general order of events is as follows:- The woman chops across to another man; the enraged husband with his eastern ideas of summary justice hacks the woman and the other man to pieces, then he usually commits suicide. If he has not the good grace to do so the justice department will dispense with his existence' (ibid).

Although the MMSA disliked Andrews for bringing to public attention an aspect of life in Fiji that they had effectively sidestepped, they could not deny the accuracy of the argument. One of their own senior officials had already published similar opinions a few years previously when the Indian public could not have cared less about their compatriots in Fiji. But after the war years the situation was different. Indian nationalism was developing and so were local Indian-organised and owned industries needing surplus labour. An attack on indenture was part of the political manipulation of the new elite in India. The officials in Fiji were aware of the political implications of the publicity about morality on the plantations. The labour supply would be affected.

Since the importation of labour from India was coming under threat, the officials in Fiji attempted to combat this by encouraging increasing domestication of women on the plantations. Indian women were somewhat badly placed for the emergence of 'family' structures on the plantations, nevertheless officials tried to restore the notion of domestication by permitting women to commute their indentures early under the Indian Immigration Ordinance of 1915 Section 6, or by allowing them to leave the fields before dark so that they could cook meals for their men. This had the effect of further confining women, for those who did not conform to the idea of the domesticated 'wife' were faced with the displeasure of both Indian and European men.

(v). The Domestication of indentured Indian Women on Plantations.

At the beginning of their indenture contract women could not be

confined by the rules of kinship and marriage that had mapped out their activities and their behavior for them in India. Thus they experienced a sense of freedom and independence from religious and cultural-based restrictions. However, while kinship and marriage were no longer part of the lives of single women, it was too much to expect that domestication would also have been eradicated. The domestication of Indian women was enforced without the sanctions of marriage and kinship. Domestication was structured first of all by the allocation of women to a certain number of men on the plantation, and secondly by the expectation that Indian women would service Indian men for free. The domestication of Indian women on plantations took into account their low numbers, as well as their ability to nurture and rear men and children, but this was achieved by planters by means other than the formation of family 'units' or marriage. In other words the domestication of women was reconstructed despite the deconstruction of kinship and marriage. This was achieved through the actual mechanisms of the plantation production system itself.

Sometimes the allocation of Indian women began in the depots: One Chinmiah was permitted to go to the quarantine depot in Fiji to 'select a female' from among those 'rejected and set aside'. He even offered to pay the cost of her passage. Chinmiah was a plasterer by profession and earned 16/- a week. Thus he was able to pay for the woman he had chosen (CSO MP 7822/12). This practice continued thereafter. When the first emigrants reached the plantations, the women were allocated their rooms in the lines. Each crowded room had barely enough space for three adults or a 'family'. Reports of plantation life filtering through to India alleged that the women were allocated to men in proportion to their numbers. Thus in a line of 12 adults, four would be women. There would be no women-only or men-only lines. The males and females were mixed up. Although there is no official report suggesting that women were evenly divided among the men, Andrews in his reports claimed that women were so allocated by plantation personnel. He also alleged that labourers could have access to the women only after the stronger men, including the sirdar, had taken the best of them for his own use (Andrews op cit p 29).

This allocation of women to men, even if it did not take place officially, had the consequence of domesticating women in two ways: first, there was the expectation that women would cook, clean and service the men. The case of Baggia cited in Chapter 4 is evidence of this. The trouble was that Baggia did not wish to live with an old man and 'cook his rice as the overseer commanded. She killed herself instead. Others, however succumbed so that at the end of a long day in the cane fields they came back into their rooms and cooked and cleaned for their permanent lover or lovers, or for several men, who may or may not have given them money for this task. As McNeill and Chimman Lal pointed out, the working day was far too long for women:

'Especially in the case of women who cook for their husbands on return from fieldwork the 10 and-a-half hours a day is unduly long' (McNeill and Chimman Lal op cit 250), and 'The system of restricting the industrial service of women under indenture to three years out of five of indentured residence is a matter about which there is much diversity of opinion....some managers think that both men and women are more contented if the woman is free of all obligation to work after three years. Others think that a woman who is not occupied otherwise than in cooking her husband's food is more likely to get into mischief, and several stated that men have privately asked that women should be sent out to work. So far as we could ascertain employers are not particularly anxious that women should work provided they are properly maintained and absence from work does not merely mean exposure to temptation and possibility of serious trouble. Even during first three years a woman who is known to be safely and usefully employed at home will not be sent out to the field...Experience shows that the authority of the husband or protector is not always able to overcome a woman's disinclination to work, and even apart from possible temptations from outside it is frequently better for all parties that this authority should be reinforced' (ibid p 314).

McNeill and Chimman Lal were actually recommending the reconstitution of Indian patriarchy by suggesting that women could be removed from work to look after men. This report was taken as the authority on indenture from 1913 onwards, and its policies and recommendations closely adhered to by Indian and British officials. Unfortunately, in Fiji itself, this order was difficult to carry out. The actual

plantation conditions and the calibre of labourers allotted for Fiji did not permit the construction of the 'ideal' husband/wife team, with the women cooking for her husband in a pleasant, clean environment, that the two officials had recommended. What emerged was a rough allocation of women in proportion to the men and the encouragement of 'free' work by women for several men. And if women refused to work for their husbands or were late home at the end of the day through the fault of some overseer or sirdar, they were punished by Indian men. For example, Ammakana had left her husband who committed suicide. But during their marriage he had constantly complained of her shortcomings as a housewife (Lal 1985b p 142). An account by Walter Gill who was the overseer of a woman's gang is also revealing. He dealt with a potential go slow strike of women by not letting them leave the field until each woman's task was finished. This resulted in the appearance of wrathful men who came to see why

'Their women were not in the "lines" preparing the evening meal. I told them... When a man complained that he had not eaten all day, I said that except for a small and hurried breakfast it had been like that with me, adding that if any one of the lazy trouble-making bitches were mine, I would whip the hide off her when I got her to the "lines". Still angry, the men moved away to talk among themselves. More came. The moon rose. At nine a woman had my permission to go. Immediately she crossed the boundary-drain her man beat her with a stick. She was the first of many' (Gill op cit p 35).

By telling the men how he (a sahib) would treat 'his woman', he was outlining the appropriate behaviour of Indian men towards the women. If they got into trouble and were unable to maintain the men they were to be punished, even if the reason that women were unable to do their work as women in the first place had to do with their exploitation by the company as workers.

The encouragement of 'free' work by women also included the expectation that sexual services would be provided. This was mostly of an unpaid nature because women also did housework for the men with whom they had sex. Yet there were many exceptions, for women also provided sex for payment. But while these women tended to receive

money for sexual favours, they were most unlikely to request payment for housework. This suggests that sex was in short supply but houseworkers were not. Women appeared to have separated out their roles as sexual partners and their roles as carers and nurturers. Men confused these two roles of women, assuming that the women who provided for them in terms of housework would also sexually service them alone. The women were able to act differently according to whether they desired to be a carer or a sexual partner. This different view of the world of women on plantations caused much anger among the men, and anti-woman violence. It also made possible the organisation of prostitution.

(vi). Prostitution.

It is difficult to deal with the prostitution of women on Fiji's plantations because of the ideas about this profession held by the chroniclers of the time. Most of the reported cases of prostitution were recorded by either European philanthropists or Indian men and were rarely accurate statements of this type of work. The colonial and CSR officials did not discuss prostitution because of the danger that any focus of this nature would jeopardise labour importation. Nevertheless when some official person on rare occasions mentioned prostitution this was usually couched in the same terms as that offered by Indian men and the missionaries. All sexual associations entered into by women and men outside wedlock were viewed as examples of prostitution. Even sexual 'promiscuity' was defined as 'prostitution', the chroniclers refusing to mention whether any money or other goods actually changed hands in return for sexual favours. This bias is also evident in the work of contemporary scholars. In the literature there is no distinction between actual prostitution (i.e. where payment was made) and that which was mere sexual dalliance and adventure. Sometimes serial monogamy was also defined as prostitution.

There is no doubt that prostitution existed on Fiji's plantations. Many women actively held a job in which they sought payment in return for sexual favours and there is no doubt that many a fortune was made in this way. Payment was most likely in the form of money, food stuffs, jewellery and the payment of labour fines. There were two types of prostitution on plantations: those that were organised by the

women themselves, without an attendant pimp; and those that were organised by men. The men were either the husbands of the women whose bodies they bartered, or were professional pimps who only had a business relationship with the prostitutes.

The women who arranged their own businesses as prostitutes invariably had more confidence because they had arrived as prostitutes from India. Andrews believed that as many as 20 percent of the women in Fiji had been prostitutes from India (Gillion op cit p 57). This meant that for every 10 women emigrating, two were prostitutes. However it is now believed that this figure of Andrews might have been exaggerated, but at the same time it is not impossible to see why Andrews thought it was as much as 20 percent. Being a missionary, Andrews had extended the definition of 'prostitute' to include those who may only have been 'promiscuous'. The officials protested at Andrews calculations. They could not see how Andrews allegations fitted in with their own carefully worked out labour contingents. Prostitutes were not of a class that was normally considered for Fiji. They were 'uneconomic'.

From the prostitutes' own point of view they were not 'uneconomic'. Many prostitutes may well have had an incentive to come. With so much scarcity of women, the money had to be good. They would already have been women of some means who had the ability to work up a trade fast. They would have opened their 'boudoirs', hired a few 'girls' and the business was underway. These women were no different from the Madams who operated in other male dominated frontier towns. In an environment where the work was hard and the women scarce, there was little else for men to spend money on, even if this amounted to a couple of pennies a day. The colonial officials complained about such women. Firstly, they refused to do plantation work: 'Many of the female adults introduced into the Colony are of such low caste that they form by no means desirable colonists' complained the AGI in his 1886 report. He was echoing CSR's complaints that women of the lowest classes (i.e. prostitutes) were refusing to work. The reasons for the large absenteeism of workers on the estates in 1885 was blamed on the idleness, seclusion, gambling and prostitution of women and men (AGI Report for 1885).

The prostitutes from India were not satisfied with working on their own. They quickly enticed a few 'novices' away from the 'lines', with promise of fast money and a relatively luxurious life free from the drudgery of plantation labour. Many of the women they recruited had already failed as workers and were vagrants, wandering around the towns in search of work as 'free' emigrants. Others had been to prison, having been convicted under one of the labour laws, and after their sentences they had not wished to go back. As the AGI pointed out: '..Destitute of food and lodging (the women) resorted to houses of questionable character in the township of Suva for maintenance' (AGI Report for 1886). These were easy targets for the Madams who had set up their business after commuting their indentures which they could well-afford to do after just a few months.

Other women operated alone. In the lines such women could earn their living as lone prostitutes who had no overheads, but also no protection. These women were easy targets for male violence. For example Sanpatti, who had arrived in Fiji with her husband but had left him for a life of prostitution committed suicide after a violent quarrel with one of her new lovers over money. After she died her former husband and her latest lover quarrelled over her assets which brought the matter to the attention of the Colonial Secretary (CSO MP 498/1890). Such lone operators were useful in the lines. They could be called upon to work in the fields and they could also service the men at night without the plantation getting the reputation of running a fully-fledged 'whorehouse'. But if these women resisted plantation hierarchy, or got the plantation personnel into trouble with the law as happened in the case of Bhuri cited above, then they were accused of being unreliable as witnesses because they were prostitutes or women of loose morals (CSO MP 5454/13).

Many women preferred male protection and provided sexual services for payment under the vigilance of a male Indian. The male pimp sometimes took his cut from the woman's earnings, or in sex which the woman provided him for free. There were two types of male pimps: those who were the husbands or lovers of the women and either permitted or forced the women to earn money as prostitutes; and those who were only

business partners and had no other claim on the women. For example, the man who killed Overseer Kemp would have been willing for his lover Mangri to have had sex with Kemp (even after the rape), as long as he (Kemp) paid for her services. But Kemp refused to give either food or money. Mangri complained and Ramkissun killed Kemp out of a combination of the emotions of sexual jealousy and anger at being cheated out of 'his' earnings.

Andrews was aware of this practice of men hiring out their wives to other men for a sum of money or for jewellery. He was told that this had become the 'dustur' (custom) in Fiji for when a new family came out, the husband was told that he must allow his wife to be 'used for immoral purposes, because of the number of men who are wifeless' (Andrews op cit p 72). This resulted in 'dosti' (friendship) between a married woman and an unmarried man, often the three of them- husband, wife and 'lodger'- residing in the same room. Although this may not have been 'prostitution' because the woman was available to only two men, it is nevertheless the case that the 'lodger' paid the couple for the use of the wife's sexual as well as household services.

The men who were acting as pimps for the women were businessmen who were able to make money through one of the few methods available to Indians in Fiji. Those who were former indentured labourers were storekeepers or proprietors of lodging houses in the towns. Some were indentured men themselves, while others may even have been free labourers. Labouring tasks would not have appealed to these men. As pimps they would have been able to commute their indentures after the payment of the indenture fee almost immediately. Those who lived in the towns were able to provide food and lodging for the women recently out of gaol. Others waited till the women got to gaol, then offered to pay off their fines. The women spent the rest of their time, which would have normally been spent in gaol, working off their obligations to the men by earning money as prostitutes. The AGI was aware that this was going on. In his 1885 report he pointed out: 'The proximity of the principal gaol of the Colony, at Suva, to the Rewa plantations, and the facility of transit by land to that town, led to a system of bailing out women who had been committed to gaol with the alternative of a fine, generally for desertion or unlawful absence. The fines were

paid in Suva by free coolies or deserters from Rewa plantations, who then employed the women during the term of their original sentence in prostitution about the town; and they returned to the plantation at a period corresponding to the normal expiry of their imprisonment, after a more or less pleasant outing-often carrying with them some newly acquired disease of a venereal nature'. The authorities attempted to curtail this by prohibiting the payment of fines later than 24 hours after conviction. If the fine was not paid in time, the alternative of imprisonment was to be carried out and if it was paid in time the immigrant was returned to the plantation (AGI Report for 1885). There is no doubt that the male pimps would have been able to produce the fine money within 24 hours and sometimes the planter was unable to take the woman back to the plantation immediately. In such cases the pimps were able to run a flourishing trade.

Finally, there was one other type of prostitution which was eventually declared by the authorities and the philanthropists to be the most serious of all- the traffic in female children. (4) On the plantations and in some of the free settlements, many parents bartered their children for certain sums of money. There was so much money to be made out of the bartering of female children that often parents sold their daughters several times over to different men. The most infamous case was one that had the consequence of generating debate for the constitution of a marriage law for Indians. In Chapter 9 I discuss the marriage laws in detail. In this chapter I only detail the case which initially had the most impact on discussions about morality on the plantations and on the need to 'confine' women through marriage law so that violence could be controlled.

Early in 1912 the police were called to the scene of a triple murder. The victims were two women, Parbatia and Surumah, and a man, Lal Bahadur. Surumah was 13 or 14 years old, and Parbatia was much older, reported to be the mother of Surumah. All three had been cut up with a cane knife. Surumah had died after being stabbed through the neck, while Parbatia had attempted to run away but had been caught in the yard. She died as a consequence of more than 50 knife wounds on her body. Two young men, Barat Singh and Ramsundar (a Brahmin) were charged with their murder.

From the evidence given in court at the hearing it appeared that Parbatia and her husband Jibodh (who gave evidence), had been in the habit of selling ('betrotthing') their daughter Surumah to various men since she was eight or nine years old, perhaps even earlier. In court, Jibodh said he knew the accused who were cooks and who were in the habit of visiting his daughter, 'I suspect to have intercourse with her'. Meanwhile, Surumah also had another lover, Lal Bahadur (one of the victims) who had been with her for three or four years. But this was not all. Under questioning Jibodh revealed that once he had also betrothed Surumah to another man by the name of Oudhram. When he did this Lal Bahadur had got angry and had gone away. Jibodh also agreed that his daughter had once been abducted about two years previously by two men (unnamed) who were still serving a prison sentence for the crime. Two weeks previously his daughter had quarrelled with the two accused, one of whom had not given her father money 'Indian fashion'. This man (Ramsundar) had later told the Fijian police officer who arrested him that he had spent a lot of money on Surumah but she had taken up with another man. He gave this as the reason for his killing Surumah, her mother and her 'husband'.

The evidence given in court was particularly damaging to the father because it appeared that he had been bartering his daughter for a number of years, and although the girl had been about 13 years old at the time of her death she had been a noted prostitute. Her mother Parbatia had also been in the habit of betrothing her daughter for certain sums of money. Jebodh's betrothal of his daughter to Ramsundar had been done after the sum of five pounds had changed hands but then Jebodh took Surumah away again and sold her to Lal Bahadur. Surumah's child by Ramsundur was adopted by Lal Bahadur. Ramsundur then got a friend to help him and one night they broke into the hut of Jebodh, his wife, daughter and son-in-law and butchered all. Jebodh somehow escaped.

The death sentence was passed on the young men who were barely 18 years of age. At the news of this, petitions began to be organised by white and Indian men of a certain class in Fiji. The governor and the immigration department were inundated with messages of protest and

petitions which held that in this case the death sentence was too harsh. In order to help the young men, the petitioners blamed the girl Surumah herself for her own death. In a letter to the Governor, Sir Francis Henry May, well-known Suva lawyer Crompton argued that there was strong public opinion against the sentencing of the two men who were both 'excellent characters'. He said that the death penalty should be set aside for a term of imprisonment because the men had been provoked: 'The younger woman who was murdered and over whom the trouble arose was the direct cause of three persons committed previously to gaol for long terms. There is little doubt that the cause of all this is the fact of Indians trafficking in their female children, and the two boys are unfortunate victims'. A petition signed by 30 people, and a letter from the Manager of the Vancouver Fiji Sugar Company to Rev. C. Bavin who organised it were also received. In the letter the manager E. Duncan said that the petitioners had his fullest support, although he himself could not sign the petition: 'I hope the governor can reprieve these boys- they should not suffer because of a renowned prostitute'. Ramsundar's evidence was recorded at the trial and publicised: 'I killed Parbatia (Surumah's mother) because she called me the son of a pig'. Prior to killing Surumah he had snatched his child out of her arms. Eventually, the sentence of both men was commuted to life imprisonment.

This decision was arrived at by the officials probably after they had considered two significant points: first, Surumah had been a prostitute and, second, the main person accused was a Brahmin and claimed paternity of Surumah's child. Although Surumah was still only a child herself, the blame for her own murder and that of her 'husband' and mother were placed on her. Her life of prostitution, although initiated and conducted profitably by her own parents, was seen as her own fault and she faced the consequences of her own actions when she was killed. All the petitioners asked for leniency on behalf of the accused on the grounds that they had been severely provoked and that they should not suffer on account of a 'renowned prostitute'. Jebodh and Parbatia were also held to blame, but it was acknowledged that the 'system' encouraged such behaviour and that it could be counteracted with the enactment of a satisfactory Marriage Ordinance which permitted legal marriages among Indians. The officials

assumed that once legislation was passed making allowances for permanent associations between men and women, abuses would not take place. With this in mind they sought legal opinion on the mechanisms of a new marriage law. They also made enquiries about 'the extent of trafficking in young girls for the sake of profit on the part of parents' but no real investigation took place. Eventually, in all documents, the trafficking of children was blamed on the 'natural' immorality of the Indian race as a whole.

The fact that Ramsundar was a Brahmin had an impact on the officials making the decision regarding his impending execution for murder. He was reported to be of good character and held a job as a cook, rather than as a menial labourer. He also had a child with Surumah and had killed her when he heard that her new husband had adopted his offspring. The insult he had felt when Parbatia had called him (a Brahmin) 'the son of a pig' had made him angry enough to kill her too. Under these circumstances he could not be treated in the same class as other murderers and thieves going through the courts. Ramsundar's impeccable credentials as a young upper class Indian male who was anxious about the paternity of his offspring and about his origins as a Brahmin earned him the sympathy of even the most racist and cruellest of taskmasters and law-makers. The death penalty was not imposed. It was recognised that he was a victim of the system.

This sympathy was not extended to Surumah whose death had been the consequence of indiscriminate trading of her body by her own parents since she was a mere child. Surumah was destined to be defined as a prostitute who had caused the death of two others as well as the imprisonment of several men over the years. In the records, Surumah was not a 'victim'. She had caused the deaths of people and her own death was not to be mourned.

This case had the consequence of changing some aspects of the legislation regarding marriage. In an effort to ammend the Indian Marriage Ordinance of 1892 (Section ii only), the officials prohibited parents from betrothing any of their female children who were less than 15 years old. The penalty for such betrothals was twenty pounds fine or up to six months hard labour. But upon reaching the legal

minimum age of betrothal and marriage, if a female was found to be not married to the man to whom she had been promised (in the presence of witnesses), the parents or guardians had to provide officials with good reasons for why she was not yet married. It was now also compulsory for marriages to be registered, although it was recognised that the registration fee was prohibitive (ibid).

However, as was inevitable in a situation where legislation was being used to patch up a severe social problem, exceptions to the rule soon arose. Some women younger than 15 were unable to get married to a man of their choice because their parents wanted to make money out of marrying them to older and richer men. This was brought to the attention of the colonial authorities by an Indian lawyer D.M. Manilal who had recently arrived in Fiji to look after Indian interests. Manilal's observations and requests were relegated to the attention of a special committee which was formed to look into the question of marriage laws in the colony (CSO MP 1382/12).

There was no doubt that both colonial state and employers knew that in Fiji prostitution was rife. But the bartering of women's bodies was not defined as prostitution by them because to do so would place under scrutiny the colonial officials' handling of social life on plantations. But people like Andrews went to the other extreme. He labelled all women's associations outside of marriage as prostitution, thus muddling the boundaries for everyone, including contemporary scholars. Although Andrews' comments served to sensationalize and publicise the 'immorality' on the plantations, CSR and other employers were only able to act on what they knew within the context of overall profiteering. CSR officials offered few opinions about the extent of prostitution on the plantations but one, Hughes, eventually pledged that the company would increase the wages of women beyond ninepence (CSR F4.0.2.1).

The Colonial Government officials were unable to sidestep the issue of organised prostitution. They were the recipients of irate memorandums sent by officials in both India and Britain. The Indian Department of Commerce and Industry conducted its own investigation for the Secretary of State for India Austen Chamberlain, and reluctantly

acknowledged that the charges made against the labour system for encouraging fraudulent recruiting, the slavery of men and the prostitution of women had, 'after making allowances for all possible inaccuracy and exaggeration.... a substratum of truth in each one....This is not a position which we can afford to allow to continue' (ibid). In an effort to combat the disapproval of the officials higher up in the state hierarchy, Fiji colonial officials attempted to ignore a request by the White Slave Traffic Convention (which had the support of men such as the Secretary of State for the Colonies). The Convention had been set up to investigate the trafficking and enslavement of women. Although the Convention was concerned with white slave traffic, those involved were also concerned about the enslavement of other women. But colonial officials in Fiji responded by denying that there was a white slave traffic in Fiji. However in an inter-departmental memo, the officials decided that they would not mention the system of 'betrothals' that was the custom among Indians as this was part of their tradition and was not a suitable matter to report to the Convention (HO MP 9805/16 and S.S. 5016/21). The exploitation of Indian women had once again become invisible.

The prostitution of women in Fiji during indenture has always been difficult for observers and scholars to assess. Many men who examined this subject were puzzled by the range of bartering activities in which the women were involved. Some worked alone, others had business partners. Some appeared to take money, others just had a good time and could not be called prostitutes in the strict sense of the term. Yet all men defined indentured women as prostitutes. Even the indentured period was referred to as 'whorehouse' or brothel. Under such circumstances women were tainted by the atmosphere of buying and selling of women's bodies whether they were in the business or not. The officials dealt with this in different ways. CSR officials turned a blind eye as long as profit was being made, and if prostitutes kept stability in the lines, well so much the better. CSR policy in Fiji, according to Knox in 1917 was 'to be just, favour none, and leave the women alone' (ABL 142/1063). As businessmen they had to apply business ethics to this profitable operation. State officials, following CSR's example also turned a blind eye until they were called in for questioning by those higher up to whom they were responsible. This

caused a tension between CSR and government officials for the reports of immorality and murder which were being used by Indian nationalists and sympathisers to gain India's independence from Britain threatened labour supply. CSR pleaded and then threatened to keep the regular indentured labour force coming but officials in London were adamant. Britain would rather retain India and cancel indenture than allow CSR to make profits for itself and for Fiji at the expense of India. Indenture had to go. Although the company officials whined, cajoled and threatened (ABL 142/3164), the indenture system as a system of bonded servitude had to go. But CSR was not yet lost. For ten years or more officials had already begun to plan and rear their own labour supply- from within the colony itself- in the form of Indian children. When labour transportation was threatened, this labour supply was called in to save the profits. In a private memorandum a company official recommended that the practice of leasing out land to Indians in small family parcels was to be encouraged (CSR F.4.0.2.15). The ability of call upon this supply of labour had originated in the aspect of plantation production not defined initially as 'work' which was now a necessity. This was the production of children.

2. Biological Reproduction

During the first few decades of the indenture system as it operated in Fiji children were not wanted. The company wanted young, strong workers, unimpeded by parents or children. Officials often complained to the colonial government about the large number of children arriving in the Colony. The AGI conveyed this to India (AGI Report for 1889). The following year the proportion of women went down. There was little encouragement to recruit women if they were mothers. Young, fit and childless women were wanted by the planters.

On the plantations the birth rate was low, but no lower than that in contemporary India, Mauritius and Surinam. In actuality the birth rate on Indian plantations exceeded the rate in contemporary England and Wales (Shlomowitz 1987 p 209). Nevertheless within Fiji itself the birth rate of indentured women was considerably lower than 'free' women (ibid).

But children were never considered a resource in the early days of indenture. The children who were born on the plantations, or who arrived in Fiji with their Indian mothers were encouraged to die. The children found it difficult to survive their first year. The infant mortality rate of Fiji Indians was considerably higher than the rate prevailing in Europe and Australia (Shlomowitz 1986 p 295). Most of the deaths occurred from diarrhoeal diseases which in turn were caused by bad nutrition and inadequate care. Another major cause of death was congenital syphilis.

The death of children in the early years of indenture reflects CSR officials' attitude towards them. Children were not wanted and little was done for their care. The women who had given birth to them provided for them as best they could after their day's work was done. Thus there were few nurseries before the 1890's (an 1891 Ordinance provided for this) and afterwards, consisted of dirty and cramped two rooms at either end of each line, looked after by an older woman who sometimes fed the children opium to keep them quiet. One or two died of overdose but the mother and the nurse were only 'suspected of having administered it' (AGI Report for 1899).

In the early years, if babies did not die of natural causes or accident, then mothers were not averse to killing them. Several babies were 'suffocated' or beaten to death in the late 1880's, at the time when CSR was struggling to recover from a world slump in the price of sugar. The women were burdened by children and had to carry them to the fields with them, taking sacks for the purpose of covering up their tiny forms (Gillion op cit p 108). CSR also resisted building proper hospitals for mothers, rationed them only within the terms allowed by law for pregnancy and nursing. The officials generally pretended that women who did have children were still unencumbered. Under such circumstances it was inevitable children died. When the AGI complained to CSR officials before writing his annual report, the CSR blamed the 'ignorance of mothers' and the 'animalistic' nature of the people for the deaths and illness of children. Having visited Fiji in the early 1880's Knox had already formed an opinion about Indians to which he faithfully adhered even until as late as 1917 when he was begging for the continuance of indenture: '...still it is generally

admitted that with Indians of lower caste, where sex is concerned, they have the morals of a wild animal. I have had to sign birth certificates and the woman has been unable to tell me who was the father of her child. (I admit) the housing (in Fiji) would be bad for Australians but palaces compared to the filthy hovels Indians (are) used to. (Here) we also have ayahs to look after the kids-at home (they must) take kids to work or leave them in "oods" to look after themselves' (ABL 142/1063 Knox to Manager Nausori 1917 Private Out). The AGI dutifully reported in his annual reports year after year that 'carelessness and indifference of mothers' was the most serious cause of the deaths of infants. As an afterthought he would add: 'and debility', as another possible cause. (5)

But it was obvious that the deaths of infants had been caused because of the neglect of the mother. The low birth weights, low resistance to infections, and congenital defects and diseases such as congenital syphilis were symptoms of what was happening with the mother as much as to the children. Women were weaker, they got sick more often, and did not get enough food. Often, to get enough money for food they would work both night and day- in the daytime in the fields and at night time as a prostitute. This had grave repercussions on their ability to have children. The problem was exacerbated by other plantation conditions. In the absence of wages for example, women could be given rations.

Until the early 1890s rations were given by the employer for twelve months but the Indians began to run a flourishing blackmarket in foodstuffs, resulting in the authorities cracking down on the rationing period by cutting it in half, the wage being given initially to supplement the rations. In one case some Indians refused to take their rations and then sued the employer successfully for recovery of the amount deducted for foodstuffs. The officials put new legislation in place. Deductions were to be made whether rations were accepted or not (AGI Report for 1891 p 22). But gradually the rations began to supplement the wage, and then were phased out altogether.

With women's low earnings it was inevitable that women would trade their food, leading to further deterioration of their health. This

inevitable breakdown in health led ultimately to a weakened labouring population, because the numbers of women could not be reduced, and by eliminating the health of women, the company was beginning to eliminate close to one third of its labour force. The government officials knew what could happen. This may have occurred in other colonies during British occupation- they warned the company. The AGI argued that the company would have to decide 'from a purely economic point of view whether a continuance of this loss of health among the servants will be of more advantage....than further attempts involving some outlay to reduce or minimise it (AGI Report 1894 p 471). CSR was beginning to lose 25 percent of the potential utility of each labourer within the first year of indenture (ibid). Between 1895 and 1900 more than a third of the next generation of workers were being lost (calculated through analysis of mortality figures in the AGI reports). The figures were blamed on the mothers' refusal to work giving 'pregnancy, nursing and illness' as their legitimate excuse. In defiance of CSR's lack of vision, the colonial government took matters into its own hands. It passed legislation dealing with the standard of food to be given to the labourers (ghi to adults and milk to children (AGI Report for 1886), and ordered CSR to clean up its act in the matter of housing and work standards. In 1888 it ordered employers to give milk to the mother of a new born child in the first year of birth if her husband was not earning the statutory minimum wage (AGI Report for 1888), and also ordered the supply of rations to all children under five. But CSR objected, although officials later agreed to build nurseries and separate kitchens, and three years later the colonial government acknowledged that its policy could not be implemented because 'the supply of milk was insufficient on the estates and the workers' children could not be supplied with a daily ration (AGI Report for 1891). The government's actions in improving legislation were reported favourably in the annual AGI Reports (see 1901-1909 AGI Reports). Officials also attempted to excuse the CSR from blame for the loss of 21 per cent of the infants on plantations in 1897 and 1900. The mothers were again blamed for neglect (AGI Report for 1898 and 1900). Complaints were also lodged about women not working. In 1896 58 per cent of the women had their indentures extended, averaging 40 working days per woman (this was the case for only 49 per cent of the men). After 1895 also, women's work participation increased, while

their wages dropped. This can be seen from Table 5 of the previous chapter. On some plantations e.g. Macuata) women earned barely five pence a day.

With such harsh plantation conditions, it became increasingly more difficult for women to survive. Eventually, even CSR officials became aware of the effects of labour power deterioration. The officials were beginning to use harsh methods in the control of labour for workers were vehemently resisting their absolute exploitation. In 1899 the highest numbers of charges laid in any district were laid by immigrants against their masters. Fifteen overseers and sirdars were convicted (but 16 acquitted) as a result of complaints received from coolies. One sirdar, having brutally assaulted a woman, spent six months with hard labour in prison (AGI Report for 1899). This was a rare occurrence in all the years of indenture. CSR officials now had to use force upon workers they themselves had used and abused. But this practice had turned on itself for it was impossible to get any more work out of the workers. They were beginning to die. Female mortality rates were usually higher than male mortality rates (See AGI Reports for all years except 1892). Of all the labourers on the plantations, women were beginning to become the most expensive, for not only were they not wanted, it was also impossible to get a labour force to generate an income without them. Under such circumstances, CSR officials were faced with a long-term difficulty. By 1910 two things had become obvious- a healthier and faster regenerating labouring population was needed, and the international economic context was changing and had to be considered. In an effort to get fresher workers from India, emigration from Madras was opened by 1903 to cope with the increasing scarcity and poor quality of north Indian workers (Gillion op cit p 51). But even these proved to be useless. Madrassis were harder to manage and more prone to committing suicide. Moreover, CSR was beginning to employ larger numbers of 'free' Indians who were 6 pence a day more expensive but did not have to be housed or fed. The employment of 'free' labour was also happening world wide, and various calculations were made as to the desirability of employing free workers. Furthermore an imperialist war was pending and the capitalist world was gearing itself up for the monopoly era. CSR could not be left behind with an archaic system of bonded labour. But

officials needed quick capital in order to make the transition. For this reason they attempted to quickly commute women's indentures so that they could cook their husbands meals. Officials also built hospitals and gave money to the Methodist Mission for schools, and increased wages for both free and unfree emigrants. In his private letters to his managers Knox recommended increasing wages and improving medical conditions (ABL 142/1063 Private Out to Nausori Mgr from Knox ibid). But before CSR officials could generate any real income with the use of bonded labour only (they even threatened the government with ' unless we got the labour the industry must go under ' (CSR F.2.0.32), and sent officials to England to beg there), the war broke out and all transport was halted for the duration of the war. CSR had been caught out. The officials fell back on the labour power of two types of workers they had used till then- the 'free' workers which they continued to encourage, and the bonded workers that remained but who were quickly commuting their indentures to become free waged labourers. But CSR's major plan was to encourage Indian family farms, with all control over lease, debt, seeds, manure, harvesting methods and milling retained in the hands of the company. All the Indian small-farmer did was plant cane for the CSR, and enough to eat for himself and his family. He received a certain proportion of the final price after the cane had been sold on the international markets by the company . Thus:

'The scheme which so far has found most favour is one whereby the Company continues to do all the horsework and the tenants the hand work, including the harvesting of the crops. The farm is handed over to the tenant in rotation as a going concern, the value of the crops and other assets handed over being debited to the tenant's account, payment of which is extended over the crops of several years...The tenant is not required to put any money into the venture beyond the payment of a half year's rent...and the Company makes advances for his sustenance until the crops are harvested. The ideal of all colonisation is to make the settler as independent as possible and to enable him to draw the direct return from his labour supplied to the land...in our case the settler not only requires no capital to start with other than the labour of his hands, but he is guaranteed a price for his product practically on the farm , seeing that we pay the same for cane 80 miles away as for that produced alongside the factory' (CSR F2.06.1).

The company refused to increase the price of cane, thereby doing away with the European small farmer who could not survive on the price paid to Indians who ate little (Narsey op cit and Knapman 1987). Officials also encouraged Indians to remain on the land, although it could not be sure that all of them would stay. Thus they attempted to provide incentives which they thought Indians would like. Farms were leased to men with wives only (Jayawardena 1975 pp 74-88) and women discouraged from wage employment. In turn, CSR benefitted in several ways: first by encouraging Indians to settle with their wives and families officials compelled the new labour force to do the growing of cane which CSR was never very good at anyway; second it was able to command more labour power for the price of one one by expecting women and children to work for free (ABL142/2898), and, finally, the future labour force was generated in the form of children. Most cane farmers who were working in Fiji until the time of CSR's departure in the early 1970's were the second or third generation of farmers on their land, their parents and grandparents having leased it from the company in the early 1920s (Veisaru Cane farm fieldwork 1986). Thus the focus on the improvement in the conditions of children and mothers in the early 1900s guaranteed the CSR labour force which had begun to deteriorate due to immense exploitation, frequent breakdown, and political agitation of Indians many of whom were horrified at the condition of the returned emigrant- emaciated, ill and destitute (Andrews op cit, Gillion op cit). At the threat of losing its hold, CSR reorganised its labour supply by improving standards for women, encouraging the birth of children and building hospitals and schools. By 1915 CSR had the reputation of being something of a philanthropic organisation, to such an extent that the Methodists began to defend the company when attacks were made about the condition of labourers. CSR gave frequent donations to the church, partly to help the labour force improve, but also to keep the mission quiet. When Andrews condemned Fiji's treatment of Indians, the missionaries called him a trouble-maker, and a member of the class of European who grovelled to the Indians.

CSR as a company was hardly philanthropic. Officials were merely protecting its investment. The Methodists fell for it and so did the government. The Indians were well aware of the state of affairs. As

soon as they became 'free' they staged a cane strike, agitating for higher wages. They also challenged the government for voting rights. And they spurned the Methodists by refusing to convert. The failure of the Methodists to convert the Indians in any significant numbers was always a big failing of the MMSA. No matter how hard the missionaries tried only a very small number of Indians became Christian. The MMSA documents all reveal the desperation with which the Mission attempted to convert Indians. The missionaries started the first orphanage for the children whose parents were usually victims of plantation violence, or those who had mothers of 'ill -repute' (see MMSA M/33), they started the first schools and they set up hospitals, brought in nurses, midwives and doctors. They also trained the first teachers and nurses, and the first Indian catechists, but to no avail. Indians took the offerings but worshipped in temples and mosques. By the mid 1920s the MMSA had given up; the Indians had begun importing their own religious instructors (see Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji Souvenier Magazine 1984).

But CSR did more than just create the material conditions for the emergence of the future labour force raised and exploited in a different way from before. There was the creation of an ideology which defined the place of women relative to men. In defence of plantation conditions, one former CSR officer, recently turned government inspector (Disbrowe), said that venereal diseases spread not because of the plantation system but because of the inbred immorality of Indian women, which in any case was never as high as that of a European woman (C 150/18). By making this statement which reflected CSR policy, Disbrowe was doing two things: first he was affirming the view of the 'double standard of sexual morality' that white men used with reference to black women; and second by saying that Indian women were 'naturally' immoral, he was forcing Indian men to condemn this insult to their male honour. Indian men gathered force and began to talk about 'izzat', and religion. They imported religious leaders and swamis, and talked marriage laws. The ideology was set in place. The wealthier Indians protected their izzat by confining their women even to the extent of not sending female children to school, and the poorer Indians married their now redundant girls off early, paying dowry instead of bridewealth. This ideology also eliminated women from paid

employment, so the only option was to get married and have children. Marriage rituals became important, Indian films were imported, outlining the roles of the pious woman (see Shameem 1986), and motherhood extolled. Indian woman's participation in paid employment dropped between 1920 and 1966 (Fiji Census Reports 1920-1970 and Desai 1974). In the 1911 Census 17.9 per cent of the women not indentured were represented in the professions within agriculture. Domestic service was also an important category of work (35.4 per cent of the women). But by 1921, 88.5 per cent of the women were defining themselves as 'domestic' (1921 Fiji Census Report), and only 1.8 per cent were in the agriculture employment category. The situation of women paid workers deteriorated thereafter. Married women were barred from employment by practice. The MMSA refused to employ married women, and fired those who got married. Nurses and doctors were brought out to show women how to be good mothers and active support for the women's mission started from overseas. The first women's organisations were formed around 1925. Women were now defined as wives and mothers.

Thus biological reproduction on plantations was carefully planned to fit in with the colony's labour requirements. Women were more or less the reserve army of labour as far as the regeneration of the labour force was concerned. In the early years children were 'uneconomic' so there was a high death rate, which was as much induced as 'natural'. But the deterioration of the health of the mother encouraged the introduction of Indians from different towns in India but when this failed, the ideal of wifhood was resurrected to 'reproduce' the male free worker and farmer, and later the free child. Furthermore the labour of all three units, men, women and child could be used on the farm. The employment of young children under 15 was illegal after 1908 (Gillion op cit p 108). On the farms, this legislation was irrelevant. Three and four year old children looked after animals, and at age six they could do light labouring tasks such as vegetable gardening and sowing. By leasing out only family farms, CSR could use the labour of all, man, woman and child. Women's labour was not employed for a wage but the tasks they did on the farm were as difficult as those they had done under indenture. The children learnt early, and male children took over the farm and kept it within the family. The birth of sons was inevitably encouraged. Very few women

were permitted to lease farms. Those who did took it over in the absence of adult sons after the death of their husband.

Even under these circumstances however women were not yet ready to give in. They had built up a formidable resistance to both white and black men over the years, and this was ultimately exercised in the most violent form of resistance that Fiji had ever seen - the 1920 strike. The organised and unorganised resistance of Indian women will be discussed next.

Summary

In this chapter I have referred to women's work in the daily and generational maintenance of the indentured labour force. I have argued that women were crucial in reproduction of labour power for their work responsibilities on the plantations included the expectation that they were to create stability among the men. As such they acted as a 'reserve' army of labour for the domestic arena. They produced children when they were needed, and maintained the male workers. Thus women were allocated to men, and they were encouraged, through the payment of less wages, to stay at home and become domesticated. The prostitution of women was a consequence of the women's ability to challenge male dominance and also their inability to earn as much as men.

As the reproducers of children women were confronted by contradictions. As young workers they had to deny their motherhood, but as mothers they were compelled to give up paid work. Under such circumstances women's health quickly deteriorated. This inevitably had an impact on the overall quality of the indentured labour force. When it appeared that the labour recruitment was about to end, the company resurrected the material relation and ideology of motherhood, forcing women out of paid work and into domestication (with the help of marriage legislation) for free.

CHAPTER 7 WOMEN'S RESISTANCE ON PLANTATIONS AND INDIAN NATIONALISM

In Chapters ~~five~~ and ~~six~~, I argued that Indian women's participation in plantation labour took into account a number of labour processes. They were paid as well as unpaid workers. As waged workers they were part of the surplus labour force, and as unpaid workers they maintained, serviced and nurtured the male workers. These labour processes were crucial for primitive accumulation in Fiji. Women were earners, wives, mothers, and concubines. They were exploited in each of their spheres of work. But the the knowledge and wisdom of womanhood that they gained through each work experience was enjoyed as well; as earners Indian women had money; as wives they had security and companionship in an alien and harsh environment; as mothers they had emotional bonds with the only joyful beings on the plantations, their children; and as concubines they had fun and extra money. All these positive aspects of womanhood were enjoyed by women in the company of men. In this they could claim equality with men and look forward to the possibility of a closer, less restricted relationship than perhaps even in India.

There were however many things that angered and irritated Indian women. As earners they got paid less than men. They could also be sent to gaol for not finishing their tasks or for missing work. Women expressed anger at this because their physical exhaustion had little to do with their ability to work hard. In India they had often done extremely difficult work, but that was nothing compared to what they were compelled by force to do in Fiji. Even if they worked for nine hours, they could not get the money men earned for the same work.

As wives they could be placed under purdah. Newly married women found the rules of Indian patriarchy oppressive, even within the general oppression of plantation production. The women's husbands collaborated with the white planters to stop women from earning once they got married. Wealthier Indian men also prevented their wives from earning a wage. As wives Indian women were completely dependent on their husbands. This was particularly difficult for women who had been waged workers previously. Since looking after children was an enjoyable

occupation, many women preferred not to work when they married, but most would have liked to have an option.

The deterioration of women's autonomy did not merely involve withdrawal from paid work. Women now had to labour in the home for free and had to share their property with men. As wives they were compelled to cook and clean for their husbands for no pay, while their men did the same work in the manager or overseer's house for 1/- or 1/6 pence. Only a few women were in paid domestic service, mainly as gardeners or charwomen. As wives they had no right to property, except that vested in their daughters as potential brides. Indian women in Fiji felt the tension and reacted against the compulsion to become unpaid and un-propertied wives.

The relegation of women into the realm of domesticity also interfered with their ability to deal with their work as mothers. As mothers Indian women were always told they had failed. They were blamed for the ill-health of their children. They were also forced to work their children in the fields, and not look after them if they were ill or needed some attention. The women loved children but they found them a burden in their present lifestyle. They could not adequately care for them because they could not afford it. When children were ill, they were neglected. When they were growing up, they got into trouble through lack of proper upbringing and nurturance. They were small of stature through lack of adequate and nutritional food, and weak. The best way that Indian women could cope with the emotional burden of watching their babies die, was to show complete indifference.

Even their sexual autonomy was held in check. As concubines and prostitutes they were under the orders of their pimps. Pimps often demanded sex in return for protection. Moreover, they took a cut from women's earnings. Without protection, women could be killed or maimed. As prostitutes they were targets of violence as well as sexual and verbal abuse on the part of white managers and overseers and Indian sirdars. The older prostitutes had nothing to look forward to except poverty and a disease-stricken old age.

It would be easy to assume, as others have done, that Indian women

were nothing but victims on the plantations. Their subjugation was so complete and their work and living conditions so debased that their voices were effectively silenced. It was impossible to believe that Indian women would ever be able to mount resistance, or even voice complaints under such grossly exploitative practices. This is certainly affirmed by the literature on indenture in Fiji. Women very rarely had a voice. They did not generally lodge complaints, neither were they, as a sex, particularly violent or abusive towards plantation personnel. Even if there had been objections on the part of women these would not necessarily have been recorded in the documents. For these reasons, there is hardly a mention of women's resistance to subjugation within the general plantation literature.

The literature on plantation resistance in Fiji is scarce. In all the accounts of indenture there are only a few isolated references to the protest of labourers (Gillion op cit; Tinker op cit and Ali op cit). Thus the view has been offered that there was little organized plantation resistance and that there was a 'paucity of active protest' during indenture (Lal: 1986 p 188). It is alleged that plantation conditions actually limited the expression of protest, and that labourers became passive just to survive (ibid).

This chapter examines this notion of 'non-resistance' with a view to detailing the varied ways in which women's resistance was different from that waged by men. I argue that on Fiji's plantations, women protested and resisted their exploitation in both covert and overt ways, and that their special strategies were recognised as resistance strategies by both white and Indian men who attempted to contain them through various means. In other words women's resistance was active and visible, making the authorities and men react and respond to it equally actively and visibly in an effort to stem the tide of women's revolt.

In this chapter I argue that women's resistance on plantations did not merely affect the men of Fiji. I argue that the effect of women's resistance was felt in India where nationalist leaders such as Gandhi became aware that women on Fiji's plantations were not abiding by the rules of Indian 'womanhood'. Although Gandhi and others like him may

not have realised that the stereotyped view of Indian women as wives and mothers was not something the Indian women in Fiji necessarily aspired to, the tide of nationalist feeling that was aroused had the effect of containing and confining women to domestication. In the second part of this chapter I outline the ways in which the nationalist sentiments aroused within the breasts of the social reformers in India had the consequence of limiting the movements and politics of a very independent and articulate group of Indian women workers in Fiji. I argue first of all that the notion of plantation resistance of women has either been completely misunderstood or completely ignored to the detriment of these women, and secondly that the strategic usefulness of Indian women's protests against enslavement to the Indian nationalist cause has also been neglected as a field of study. With the intention of placing women's resistance and its effect on Indian nationalism firmly in the centre of the story, I deal first of all with women's overt and covert forms of protest, and then with Indian nationalists' militancy over the issue of 'morality' of Indian women in Fiji, itself a site of women's resistance. I make an important distinction between the different forms of resistance of women- women resisted their exploitation at work (i.e. in (re)production), and they resisted male violence. In response to this, anti-woman violence increased- violence was used by plantation personnel to extract maximum work out of women, and Indian men used force to combat women's resistance against patriarchal practices.

1. Women and Resistance on Plantations

In the article, 'Murmurs of Dissent: Non-resistance on Fiji Plantations' Brij Lal argues that on Fiji's plantations, despite their experiences of gross exploitation and cruelty, the labourers used the strategy of non-resistance in order to survive (ibid). Apart from a few public expressions of their dissatisfaction with plantation conditions, the workers were unable to mount any sustained covert action against their oppressors for several reasons: the authoritarian character of the plantation itself which prohibited the formation of organised groups of people; the different aspirations of Indians themselves, who not only came from diverse cultural and social backgrounds, but also had different reasons for being in Fiji; the sojourner mentality of the Indians who decided to stay; lack of good

leadership; the ability to become upwardly mobile in Fiji; the fundamental change in the Indians' world view; limited access to formal education; the frequent transfers of people from one plantation to another prohibiting the formation of permanent worker-based bonds; anti-worker legislation; and employer violence (ibid). These constraints were supposed to limit the actions of everyone, men, women and children.

I offer a different view which nevertheless takes into account some of the constraints mentioned by Lal. It is my intention to show that while men may have been contained and restricted by the particular structural conditions of plantation life and their own sense of values and aspirations, this was not necessarily applicable to women. In their own specific ways Indian women resisted plantation violence loudly and clearly. Their resistance was of an organised as well as an individual nature and proved to be a stumbling block in the making of profit and the maintenance of stability. That the women were successful in their actions there is no doubt. The colonial officials and employers found women's resistance to exploitation so tremendously restrictive that they devised both legal and violent means of containing them. The significant point about women's resistance is that it was targetted as much against men as against the planter class. Women were very aware that the exploitation of their labour encompassed their exploitation as women.

Neither women nor men were unable to form a formal union of organised workers because they were restricted by plantation authoritarian conditions (including anti-worker legislation and employer violence), which defined the limits within which any form of resistance could take place. This also limited their avenues of resistance. Unlike slave plantations in the American South, indentured servants could not become fugitives and run away as a method of resisting their employers because there was nowhere for the Indians to go. A few did attempt to run away to India in the early years but ended up wandering around in the jungle and had to be rescued. The forms of resistance employed by Indians in Fiji had to take the specific plantation conditions into account. The formation of unions seemed to be impossible in a situation of bondage. Only 'free' waged labourers had the ability to

form trade union organisations and thus worker unions were not formed among Indian workers in Fiji until after indenture was abolished. This meant that, on plantations, the resistance of workers had to take unusual forms.

The history and forms of resistance of the Indian indentured servants can be compared and contrasted with the experience of the American South. There the slaves could run away to the free North, or even to the swamps and jungles in the vicinity of the plantations. By running away the most remarkable aspect of slave resistance was highlighted. Fugitive action brought to the surface one of the most fundamental problems within the slaveholding society the social and political ostracising of the slaves based, among other things, on the idea of 'race' and their unfree status, was contradictory to the general liberal civil social mores of the slaveholders who had firm ideas about the rights of citizenship and individuality (Oakes: 1986) for men only. Self-government, democracy and autonomy of the white slaveholder was in direct opposition to the enslavement and lack of self-identity and autonomy of the black person. Thus in this context there was a separation of the political institutions from the social structure (ibid p 91). The laws that were framed to deal with civil and political disputes among the slaveholders could not apply to the slaves because they were defined as chattel. But precisely because the slaves were not inanimate items of value, they could act in opposition to their slaveholders' ideas about them. They could resist by running away, breaking tools, malingering and feigning illness.

But there were some similarities too. Although indentured servants rarely ran away, they could mangle, break their tools and pretend to be ill. Both slavery and indenture impinged upon politics despite the treatment of workers in both these cases as 'outsiders'. Within America as well as Fiji the slave laws and indenture ordinances were framed, not in isolation, but within the general legal framework of Anglo-American and Anglo-Saxon codes. The relationship between master and bonded servant or slave was defined and protected by state constitutions and the judiciary whose legal framework rested on notions that were outside the realm of bondage laws. For example in the case of slave fugitives who were brought back from other 'free;

states, the question of 'kidnapping' and 'abduction' arose in the law. Could a person 'abduct or kidnap' something that was recognised by another code as his 'property'? (Oakes *ibid*). (1)

In the case of Fiji, cases of murder or abuse of indentured workers were tried in the criminal courts and heard under the criminal code, and not under the labour laws. When men and women sued their employer for rations, they were successful under civil law. The labour laws were separate and upheld the view that the labourer had few personal rights during his or her period of bondage. On the other hand civil law recognised the right of the worker to his or her own rations, and the choice of whether this was to be given in cash or in food. Thus neither slave nor indenture law could deal effectively with the variety of cases involving the issue of personal rights that appeared in the courts. The situation was particularly complicated because these cases only came up in court due to worker resistance. The refusal of the workers to permit gross exploitative practices from taking place brought into focus the inability of the liberal legislation to deal with the rights of bonded workers. In resisting through the only methods possible on the plantations, the indentured workers (like the slaves before them) were slowly beginning to undermine 'the essential political component of the masters' authority' (*ibid* p 93).

This contradiction faced by the Fiji legislators could only be resolved in their eyes through yet more legislation. The various resistance strategies employed by Indians in general and women in particular forced authorities to legislate in two different ways: first they attempted to control the workers by formulating stricter labour laws (e.g. the law against more than five Indians lodging a collective complaint against their employer), and secondly, they attempted to improve the standard of living for the workers by enacting protective and humanitarian legislation like compulsory rationing, and wages for incomplete work. The resistance of workers was effective- they could use the very laws that negated their freedom to better their conditions. Thus active and covert resistance of Indians has to be seen in a broader light than just examples of strike action or complaints against employers. The resistance of Indians on

Fiji's plantations was powerful and unpredictable. They used all sorts of methods to fight against their exploitation. This ingenuity was caused by the extreme suffering they underwent as black labourers. Ultimately, as with slavery, the tension between enslavement of some human beings within an overall libertarian legal and institutional context became unbearable. Indians were beginning to seek more and more protection under the law, and those who had become 'free' and wealthy were also able to challenge their rights as 'free' men to an education and to franchise. This was difficult for white men, who had always considered the Indian to be of a permanently servile disposition. Franchise was resisted for a long time, but by 1930 Indian men were able to select and vote for their own representatives, thus setting up their own agendas for political resistance.

The extent of plantation resistance is revealed by the 'crimes' employers accused their labourers of. During the period of indentureship the most frequent complaints lodged by the employers against their workers were for 'non-performance of tasks', 'unlawful absence', 'damaging property', 'want for ordinary diligence', 'desertion', 'committing a nuisance and 'breaching hospital discipline' (Lal op cit p 207). These complaints echoed those of the former slaveholders in another context who had also punished their slaves for not doing any work, 'going slow', running away and 'being saucy'. There were also cases in both indenture and slave history of workers striking and assaulting their overseers or masters. Under the labour laws during indenture the employers could take their workers to court and sometimes obtain redress in the form of extension of bondage.

Plantation resistance during indenture was always expressed by both sexes. Both men and women were fined or imprisoned for desertion, unlawful absence, lack of diligence and being a nuisance. Of those prosecuted, close to 90 per cent were convicted (AGI Reports 1887-1916; Naidu op cit). But while men's conviction rate exceeded that of women during most of the years of indenture this did not imply that women were not able to resist their masters and therefore were not being taken to court. Women's resistance was articulated in the ways known only to them-their most powerful weapon was their femininity,

which had always been used to confine them within the plantation hierarchy as second-class workers. By using the excuse of women's ailments, women were able to be absent from work for a greater percentage of work time than men in all the years of indenture.

However, despite their absence, they were able to maintain themselves instead of starving to death. Women were able to survive for two reasons: they could stay away without losing all of their rations if they stated they were pregnant or nursing or sick (women's ailments), and they could depend on men if they stayed away illegally. Men did not have this option. If they were sick, the overseer or sirdar would force them into hospital, and if they were absent without good reason their pay was docked. There were few people that men could rely on to provide them with their basic needs. Women had already been forced into this situation of being dependent on men. They used it to advantage as a form of worker resistance.

But even in overt forms of strike action, the women appeared not to be constrained by the problems that beset men in their resistance strategies. Women were not constrained by their social and cultural backgrounds and aspirations, nor by their reasons for continuing to remain in Fiji. Since most of them stayed behind rather than returning to India they were less likely to believe that they were only 'sojourners'. Good leadership was irrelevant as far as women were concerned for their resistance had always been expressed in private, and without the need for public politics; if the plantation conditions prohibited women from following a leader it did not matter for women rarely had leaders anyway. Their activities had always been dependent on collective action rather than individual leadership, although, as will be shown in the next chapter, at certain times in Fiji they did rely on one or two powerful and articulate women leaders.

Neither were women upwardly mobile. Many women may have had personal aspirations but these were so frequently blocked by men that women's plans for improving their social and financial position were always conditional upon men's activities. Their employment was irregular and badly paid, there was inadequate childcare and few amenities for women who wished to work. It was difficult for women to plan their future independent of men under the plantation structural conditions.

Unlike men, women's changed world view did not involve a change in communal outlook. Women, by virtue of being mothers, had to take care of more than just themselves. Many had children, and so a fundamental shift in world view did not encompass the discarding of communal attitudes. Under plantation conditions they had to rely on the community of men and women so that they and their children could survive. They may have let go of certain cultural male dominated institutions like marriage and the family, but this did not imply the dismissal of their communal values. Within the plantation context women's sense of community was advanced, not hindered.

Women were also more likely to work on their plantations of domicile than be transferred. They did not face transfers as often as men and were more likely to be permanent fixtures on plantations. Under the newly constituted 'block' system labourers were able to serve on any plantation in 'blocks' to allow employer flexibility of employment. However women were exempt from this ruling which was put into practice in 1894... 'female adults can only be worked on the plantation of domicile' (AGI Report for 1895). Men could be transferred with their 'consent'. Thus, had there been a chance for the formation of organised unions, women, as the more permanent workers, were more likely to be its instigators. That this did not occur had to do with women's understanding of the idea of resistance.

Women did not have any formal education either, but historically, lack of formal education has never prevented resistance from taking place. People who resist their oppressors do not need to be educated to express their grievances against gross exploitation, as the literature from the slave plantations indicates. As will be shown below, uneducated women's resistance was most effective in bringing their grievances to the attention of the authorities.

Thus Lal's reasons for the 'non-resistance' on plantations does not apply to women. They may be construed as referring to men because men were much more likely to express their dissatisfaction through overt means, eg through strike action or formal complaints. Since the plantation conditions actively prevented these from taking place, men

could only 'murmur' in dissent. But women expressed their resistance loudly, clearly and persistently, so much so that it would be fair to say that the indenture labour system came to an end because of women's actions against exploitation and oppression. One of the most remarkable aspects of indenture was not that there was no resistance but that women's resistance to exploitation and oppression was markedly different from men. Women did share some resistance strategies with men, but their own ways of dealing with their exploitation was innovative and diverse. This was inevitable in a situation where the means by which women's surplus labour was extracted and appropriated were extremely complex and multifaceted.

(i). Women and work: a question of resistance

As early as 1882 the Superintendent of the 'Coolie Depot' in Nukulau complained to the Agent General of Immigration that a 'mad' woman had burnt down two thatched huts near the Depot. He had been forced to keep her locked up in order to 'prevent her again endangering the lives and property of all on the island' (CSO MP 82/2287). The Superintendent complained that there were several 'eccentric' Indian women in the depots awaiting transportation who were troublesome and wilfully damaged government property. The government advised that the three 'mad' women, Sudaia, Janki and Montoumi were to be taken to a barren island, Makuluva (next to Nukulau) and left there (ibid). There was no further reference to these three women. Presumably they were either sent back to India as undesirable repatriates, or left to their own devices on Makuluva which was habitually visited by bands of Fijian fishermen.

The first strike ever recorded in the Fiji documents was organised by women on Mago Island. In 1884, men and women refused to work at Mago and put down their tools. The inspector of immigrants, Carew, reporting this to the AGI stated that: 'the men evidently led by the women, who would talk, said they would not work any more at Mago, that they preferred to go to gaol' (CSO MP 84/2140). The report by Carew was brief and there was no mention of how the women were dealt with, or whether the strike was successful.

Following this there were no further reports of women-led strikes, although there was no doubt that women actively participated in stop

work and go-slow actions on the plantations (see for example Gill). The reports of other strikes are curiously devoid of mention of the participation of women, although personal accounts by former women workers themselves show that they were not only active participants, but that they frequently led the men (Mrs Tikaram, FBC 1979).

The organised strikes of labour in Fiji were difficult to organise and orchestrate. The plantation production conditions made it virtually impossible for labourers to put down their tools. Since they had no other means of earning their income and no social security or unions (although Indians quickly organised a fund out of which labour fines were paid), it was also difficult to sustain strike action. Further to this the labourers had no one to rely on when they complained. The government officials turned a blind eye, and those immigration inspectors or agents who were sympathetic because they could judge for themselves the conditions on plantations were often ignored by the more senior colonial officials. Thus, when after massive strike against the CSR in 1886 at Navuso and Koronivia by 430 labourers Governor Thurston enacted legislation banning complaints from more than five Indians at any one time and making it illegal for them to carry working tools when they did so, both Edward Wingfield of the Colonial Office and the humanitarian Fiji Agent General of Immigration, Henry Anson thought the measure was unnecessary. Wingfield thought the new law was 'Draconian' (Gillion op cit pp 83-84). But Thurston believed that the funds organised by the Indians and their ability to go on strike was 'a positive threatened danger to the Colony', and felt entitled to frame the legislation in favour of the employers. But when Thurston went on leave Anson wrote a damning annual report, outlining the severe tasks and sub-standard housing and pay that the Indians were getting from their employers. which by now was mostly the CSR Co. Anson knew that the world economic crisis was affecting the CSR's profits, and he recognised that this was being taken out on the Indian labourers. In his 1887 report he criticised the high mortality, the frequent imprisonment of labourers physically incapable of performing the statutory task and needing hospital treatment as soon as they were admitted to gaol, overtasking, and the percentage of prosecutions without a parallel in any other Colony (Gillion ibid p 83-84).

What was also interesting was that no marriages of Indians were registered in that year (AGI Report for 1887), indicating the single workers were prohibited from forming permanent associations because they could not afford it. Furthermore, permission had to be sought from the employer (especially the CSR) before marriages could take place. In this year also staff shortages at the Immigration Office had prevented inspectors and other officials from visiting all but two of the sugarcane estates. This was no indication of what the labourers' actual conditions were. The AGI discovered a discrepancy in the accounts and notes kept by the managers of plantations, from which the AGI Report was always written- employers were beginning to mark as 'absent' those workers who did not complete their tasks (ibid). This meant that when the time came for the payment of wages many workers would not have been paid for that part of the task they had finished. The AGI pointed out that the enactment of the Indian Immigration Amendment Ordinance XVII of 1887 would do much to ameliorate the condition of the immigrants because labourers would be able to claim for the tasks they did (ibid). This was a revealing report because Anson was not restrained as usual by the presence of the Governor.

Anson attempted to deal humanely with the complaints of the labourers and likened their condition to slavery because they were not represented by an independent adjudicator in their labour trials. However his concerns went unheeded and other senior colonial officials attacked him for taking the General Manager of the CSR to court for not signing a ration book (Gillion op cit p 87). In March 1888 Anson was offered another post in Samoa which he declined, preferring to return to England instead (ibid). By this means the colonial officers in Fiji who favoured CSR interests were able to get rid of one of the most compassionate protectors the immigrants ever had.

The next strike by labourers in 1888 was also unsuccessful. Again there is no mention of whether the women took part or how active their resistance was. The conditions on the plantations had deteriorated, about that there was no doubt. The overwhelming complaint on the Rewa was overtasking. It became common practice to give more tasks to those who finished early (ibid p 88). Even Knox reported that he could

not expect any more work from the Indians since they were already working to full capacity (ibid p 89). The low average wages, excessive mortality and the large majority of incapables were blamed on the class of immigrants recruited. This was referred to India, where the Agent for Fiji pointed out that the wages were so low that he could not see how people were able to thrive (FRG CP No 15 1896).

Most Indians found surviving extremely difficult and various means were devised to deal with their own abject poverty. Many complained, others became ill. Still others gave up and died, or were repatriated to India as 'incapables'. The situation for women would have been exacerbated by the large number who arrived with children in that year. The AGI complained that these women, 'unsupported by husbands' would become frequent inmates of the hospital and gaol since they could not work on the plantations (AGI Report for 1888). There was a larger proportion of infant deaths and this was attributed to the 'carelessness and indifference' of mothers. The figures for absenteeism show that women stayed away from work (using pregnancy and nursing as an excuse) for a greater number of days than men. Furthermore, on one estate nearly 41 per cent of the women were defined as 'non-workers'. On one plantation, the average daily wage of women was 4.16 pence a day (ibid).

There was another strike action in 1907 when 56 Panjabis and Pathans at Labasa struck work, complaining of low pay, insufficient food, and unsuitable work. They also claimed that in India they had been told that they would get work in Fiji as policemen. The strike turned ugly when local policemen fired on them, wounding three. It ended when the group were brought to Suva, broken up and re-distributed. Since they were unsuitable for field work they were removed from it and given other work (Gillion op cit pp 48-49). Again in 1913 five Pathans refused to work, saying they had been promised work as policemen (ibid). But by the first decade of the twentieth century, Indians were no longer staging further strikes (ibid p 102). This could have been because their health and working conditions had improved (ibid), or because plantation and colonial officials were successful in mounting a stronger force to deal with the various waves of overt unrest. The

next organised strike on the part of Indians did not occur until 1920, by 'free' workers.

But just because strike action was curtailed on plantations it did not mean that resistance could not take place. Apart from the the Mago strike, there are no further accounts of women striking. Women preferred to conduct their own battles differently. Women's methods of resistance were sometimes more effective than the overt actions of men, and recognising this, women used their protest mechanisms to full effectiveness even drawing men into the orbit of plantation resistance. For example the women who urinated en masse on hated white overseers or Indian sirdars frequently asked their male colleagues to hold the men down while they carried out their protest action and punishment. This aspect was interesting about the specific forms of women's protest at all times; women not only protested, they also punished. A man feeling the need to exploit or oppress women in any way would have second thoughts unless he was absolutely clear that he would emerge as the victor in any altercation with them. The numerous cases of anti-women violence that resulted was as much an indication of the need to exploit women's labour as it was to quell resistance.

Women were exploited for their attributes differently by different people. As earners they made money for the CSR and government. As prostitutes they made money for their pimps or Madams, and also maintained stability on plantations for the planters. As wives women did free labour for men, and maintained the household, often adding to the conjugal fund through their own work efforts. As mothers they were able to produce the next generation of workers. This also enabled the men to express their paternity and their identity through the children. Unable to escape from the exploitation in waged work because of the constraints of the patriarchal industrial plantation, women used their various 'roles' to advantage. Against the CSR and the Government, they used their feminine attributes as protest. Thus they took refuge in pregnancy and nursing and withdrew their labour from the fields. This irritated the employers who complained about the 'loss' of women workers. They had been compelled to pay the women's costs of introduction of over 23 pounds each (AGI Report for 1888). As prostitutes (also earners), women refused to become wives and to

service men for free. They demanded payment for sex. Thus they protested confinement in terms of their sexuality and through their ability to earn money and jewellery for sex and affection. Although they provided stability through their activities as prostitutes, they also cost the employer peace of mind and money. It was recognised that much of the 'labour problem' was caused by the 'woman problem' on the estates.

Those who were confined to 'motherhood' also protested. With plantation authorities they refused to discuss paternity of their children, and they frequently prevented men from recognising and identifying with paternity. As the producers of the future labour force they killed their children or permitted them to be killed, thus fuelling the authorities' concern that the mothers were 'indifferent' to their children and deliberately neglected them. They also permitted the female children to be bartered or sold despite their personal love for their offspring. Thus women's resistance as earners during indenture was articulated on all fronts and at all men, white or Indian. As such they were considered to be extremely dangerous, and various plans were devised to ensure their containment. These were designed to confront the specific ways by which women were resisting and protesting. First, women were prevented from doing fieldwork altogether so that their costs of reproduction would not have to be met by the employers even if they did not turn up for work or became pregnant or were nursing. It was expected that men would look after the women despite the fact that most women were not in regular unions. Second, several marriage ordinances were drafted, confining women to the status of 'wife' and curtailing their work as concubines. Although it took some time before women were willing to part with their independent and 'free' sexual status, the marriage laws and the religious compulsion which was also tied up with the ideology of Indian 'identity' in Fiji served to domesticate women as unpaid servicers of men. Prostitution, which was one way that women could earn money by using their feminine attributes, was no longer an option. Thus the earning capacities of women were limited by constructing domesticity, and their independent existence as prostitutes (which incorporated their femininity) was curtailed through the ideology of marriage and 'wifehood'.

(ii). Women and indenture- femininity as resistance.

As earners women manipulated the indenture system in protest against their enslavement; as already mentioned they were defiant as workers, and frequently used pregnancy and nursing as their excuse for not working. These were legal excuses and the women in this condition could still claim rations in lieu of wages. Labourers could not leave work legally except for a certain limited number of excuses. The following table compares the percentage of days lost (mainly for the CSR) by men and women through sickness, pregnancy and other lawful reasons.

Table 6 Percentage of Days Lost By Males and Females Through Sickness, Pregnancy, and other Lawful Reasons

	1885	1891	1895	1900	1905	1910	1915	1917
<u>Males</u>	19.24	12.65	8.37	5.42	2.78	5.91	2.31	2.72
<u>Females</u>	34.39	24.65	23.73	10.69	9.25	8.10	17.18	17.03

Source: Annual Reports Agent General of Immigration 1885-1917

The reasons given by the inspectors of immigration and the Agent General for the high percentage of days lost by women in comparison to men was that women stayed away because they were pregnant or nursing. Thus women were using their femininity and their feminine attributes as a form of resistance against the planters. Since the women stayed away frequently the planters lost a significant number of workers they had to pay for in passage money and in rations. Eventually women had to be eliminated from paid work altogether. Women's resistance to work in turn affected the planters ability or desire to employ them and eventually fewer and fewer women were employed. It is difficult to gauge the extent to which women used the excuse of pregnancy and nursing to get off work. From the figures available in the annual AGI Reports it is evident that the rate of absenteeism of women due to pregnancy and nursing was greater than the rate of absenteeism of men

through sickness. In the years 1885 - 1900 for example there were more women absent from work due to their condition than the number of men who were absent through illness. In 1891, 1894 and 1897 this amounted to almost twice as much as men. Women were much more likely to use their condition as an excuse because they received rations during their period of confinement. This was held to be between 14/- and 16/- per month (CSO 82/1102).

But women were also more likely to report sick or be unlawfully absent than men. In each of the years 1885 to 1900 (with the exception of 1886 and 1890) , a greater number of women stayed away from work for sickness and for inexplicable (and unlawful) reasons than men. While women and men were catered for while they were sick, unexplained absenteeism was another matter. Labourers lost wages if they did not have a legal reason to stay away. This meant that women must have had an alternative income which would have permitted them to stay away without wages. On Vucimaca plantation in 1891 women lost over 28 per cent of working days, through pregnancy and nursing but mostly through lawful illness. In the same year on the same plantation, men were also unlawfully absent in greater numbers, although this did not match women's absenteeism (AGI Report for 1891).

If the workers were unlawfully absent they were taken to the courts and fined or sent to prison. In most of the years of indenture women's conviction rate was lower than that of men. The exceptional years were 1887, 1891, 1898, 1901, 1903, 1905, 1907 and 1908 when more women than men went to gaol or were fined. (Naidu op cit p 53). Between 80 to 100 per cent of those prosecuted were convicted. Between 1907 and 1910 women were just over a quarter of the total labour force and just over eight percent of them were prosecuted under the labour laws for those years (AGI report for 1910). These labourers went to gaol. In gaol they were not exempt from exploitation. There the women washed, cleaned or broke stones (CSO 86/ 1940). But even here women resisted. Some, like Papamma, consistently talked loudly after lights out, and frequently abused the wardens and other prisoners (ibid). In 1886, upon conviction, an Indian woman, Singarian, took her child to gaol with her. The Superintendent of Prisons, writing to the Colonial Secretary, reported that this had been the second case whereby an

Indian female immigrant had brought her child to gaol. In explanation she had said that she had a husband at her plantation but he had been elsewhere at the time of her arrest. She had decided to bring the child with her instead. The Colonial Secretary did not want this case to be seen as a precedent and advised that in future the children of imprisoned women could be farmed out among other Indians at the depot (CSO MP 86/1031). In this case the woman may have had a genuine reason for taking her child to gaol, nevertheless the act of taking one's own child to gaol was an act of defiance that the authorities had to deal with quickly.

But some of the most difficult forms of protest against plantation conditions and the oppressive practices of plantation personnel were the complaints laid by indentured labourers themselves. This was extremely small in number and did not occur at all in some years (Lal 1986 p 201). It is not clear how many of these protests were lodged by women because the complaints against the employer were not usually detailed enough in the AGI Reports to show gender differences. Most of the complaints were about assault and battery and non-payment of wages (ibid and pp 201 and 204). There is no doubt that women did complain about being beaten up. In 1897 overseer Burnside was fined ten pounds in two separate cases for assaulting women workers on two successive days. He had already previously been fined five pounds but had refused to take heed of the court's warning. Burnside eventually lost his job. In 1901 resident inspector James Harper warned that it would not do to let 'people in authority off lightly'. The imposition of heavy penalties upon 'the other side causes great distrust (as to their fair treatment)' (CSO 1124/1901).

As earners therefore, women's protest was lodged in diverse ways. They went on strike, they were lawfully and unlawfully absent from work. The absenteeism through pregnancy and nursing was significant, as was sickness. In the final instance women also stayed away from work without the expectation of wages and rations. They had to provide for their means in other ways. The women shared some resistance strategies with men, but their specific and individual acts as waged workers, such as taking their children to gaol, or taking up prostitution rather than plantation work was frequently more effective than the

covert actions of men. If resistance to exploitation meant that work was not done and profits not made then women were highly successful protesters. The very means by which women were exploited on plantations were often used by them as weapons of resistance.

(iii) Resistance against domestication.

The efforts of both plantation managers and Indian men to confine women into domestication during indenture were largely unsuccessful even after the passing of legislation. In the previous chapter I argued that the domestication of women on plantations involved their allocation to men. I argued also that the low wages paid forced them into a situation of dependency, and that the stereotype of 'mother' and 'wife' was imposed on them despite the failure of plantations to cater for 'families' or even married couples. Women were also forced into domestication through their total responsibility for children.

In the same way that women had been able to withstand and resist their exploitation in the wage sector by taking refuge in their feminine attributes, women resisted domestication by upholding their status as earners. As earners under the Married Woman's Property Ordinance of 1891 any married women could hold and dispense with property. She could also be liable to sue or be sued and her husband need not be joined with her or be made party of her transactions. Furthermore, as 'wage' earners, defined by their contract, women could expect work when they wanted it. Despite the efforts of both CSR and Indian men to confine them in the home (for different reasons), women retained their right to earn a living until they were forcibly made redundant, or actively prevented from taking up paid employment. In 1915 government ordered that married women would not be called upon in future for fieldwork unless they specifically requested it. Prior to this married women were being charged two pounds and ten shillings per annum 'for this privilege' (C 64/1915). Thus the government, probably on the advice of the CSR, prior to 1915 saw married women wage earners as a privileged class, thus preventing, through policy and a 'fine', their participation in the waged work force.

As earners and potential earners on plantations, the women were defiant of authority and vocal in their objections to exploitation by

all men. They were abusive, as the Gill autobiography shows, and refused to stay in monogamous relationships unless the conditions were attractive. In other words they refused to conduct their lives in terms of the rules of custom and tradition. They did not marry, often refusing to stay with their legal husbands. They voluntarily reared their own children, refusing to recognise the paternity of the fathers. Thus they ignored and actively resisted attempts by men to domesticate and confine them, by earning money independently of men. Those who preferred not to work in field labour went into prostitution. As long as they were income earners independent of men, women could resist and withstand enforced domestication.

Apart from the attempts to confine women to the status of 'wife' or household servant for men, women were also expected to be potential 'mothers'. Again women defied the efforts of those in authority to condemn them to permanent motherhood. This was done through various means: women first of all attempted to control their fertility by contraception. Although there is no official documentation of contraceptive use among Indian women on plantations, oral accounts reveal that women's knowledge of certain herbs and potions for the control of fertility was vast. Much of their knowledge was however doomed to oblivion because of their failure in Fiji to find the plants they had known in India. However, despite the attempts of the authorities to keep native Fijians and Indians apart there was always some social interaction. The reported cases reveal interaction only among men, but Indian women's present day knowledge of Fijian herbs and medicine indicate that Indian women would have very quickly found out from Fijian women the appropriate medicines they needed for their survival in Fiji. This would have been shared among women and then passed through the generations. Judging from a contemporary article, 'Indian Customs in Pregnancy and Childbirth' by Shaukat Ali, it is evident that many of the customs of women during their confinement are similar to that followed by Fijian women (Ali 1968 compare with Waqavonovono op cit). The techniques of ante-natal and post-natal massage are shared between Indian and Fijian women. There is no doubt that Indian and Fijian women would have also shared their knowledge about fertility medicine as well. But even if medicines were unavailable, the freedom of Indian women to choose their sexual

partners would have also permitted them to exercise their knowledge of natural contraceptive methods. Most used the natural contraceptive method of extended breast feeding (Shameem, A. personal communication 1990)

And if contraception failed that there was always abortion. Abortion was a common practice on all plantations under British Colonialism. It was referred to by Dr Whitwell, the Civil Surgeon of Dirbrugarh in Assam in his annual report for 1884:

'A coolie woman gets a variable amount of leave for her confinement. After that, if the infant is not strangled at birth she must either take it out with her to her work or leave it behind, with no one to look after it. In the former case, tied to its mother's back, or left in the nearest drain, it is exposed to extremes of heat and cold...in the latter, the child gets half-starved...or succeeds in cutting short its career by a fall...So alive are coolie women to these facts that, to avoid trouble...abortion is frequently resorted to and dhais, [nurses] who produce it often make this business a very profitable one'.

This story was repeated in another document, twenty years later in 1906 when Dr Bently commented that he thought abortions were 'sometimes procured' (Tinker op cit p 206). I do not have evidence to show that women procured abortions on Fiji's plantations in any significant numbers. There is nothing in the official records to suggest that the authorities were concerned about Indian women having abortions, although they had legislated against Fijian women procuring abortions in 1877 (CSO MP 87/1148). If the planters and colonial officials could forget to record the number of births and deaths of Indian infants, it is doubtful whether they would have known about the abortions that probably occurred in the dead of night with no one but the nurse and the pregnant woman as witness. But personal accounts reveal that two main methods of abortion were used by the women: the leaves and tender tips of the hibiscus plant were crushed and mixed in a potion with water and given to the pregnant woman to drink; and/or she was sat upon and given violent stomach massage. These were two of the more successful ways of inducing abortions in a large number of cases (Shameem A. ibid)

But even if contraception and abortion were not options for women, it was unlikely that pregnant women were going to celebrate their pregnancies. The authorities could not care less about the condition of women. Most planters did not even know that their female labourers were pregnant until the colonial authorities brought it to their attention upon the women being sent to gaol. In 1886 the Stipendiary Magistrate of Rewa, S.M. Carew was reprimanded by the Colonial Secretary for sending two pregnant Indian women to gaol for non-completion of tasks. Bachia and Jiachi's pregnancies were only discovered when they got to prison where it was also discovered that they both had dependent children, aged 3 and two and a half respectively (CSO MP 86/2087). Carew made the excuse that Bachia had not told him that she was pregnant, and previously she had been able to complete her tasks. However she was heavily in debt 'for rations supplied by her employer for two pounds three shillings and ninepence. For evidence she had nothing to say'. Carew believed that Bachia had taken the child with her to court to 'avoid having to work'.

In the case of Jiachi, the story was similar. Jiachi had earned only 10/- for the whole month and did not go to hospital. 'She refuses positively to work and says she was brought to Fiji under false pretences'. In India Jiachi had been told she would sift sugar, and not cut grass. 'This woman said nothing about pregnancy, and nothing whatever of a child two and a half years old. I invariably avoid punishing women if six lunar months or even less sometimes (is) gone in pregnancy, and should be only too glad were it impossible to punish them. A great many as soon as they perceive they are with child refuse to work, and after the child is born they still decline until it is old enough to take care of itself. They practice many deceptions, moreover I have myself detected the same child being brought to court by three different women in succession on the same day, each of whom swore she was the mother' (ibid). Thus Indian women not only used the excuse of pregnancy and nursing to avoid producing for the planter, they also deferred having children in order to stay at work. Other women's children were borrowed to gain the sympathy of the magistrate who had the power to put them in prison.

In the absence of all else Indian women killed their children. In several of the years covered by the AGI Annual Reports, the women were suspected of administering opium, suffocating, or dropping their children to bring about death. Most women would have found it impossible to look after children within the plantation context and committed infanticide, whereas other women would have seen in the act of infanticide a powerful way of bringing the terrible work conditions to the attention of the authorities. Infanticide has been recognised as a form of resistance of women in the slave literature. Recently, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has argued that for the women who loved their children, infanticide (and abortion) constituted costly forms of resistance. Women did not always turn to such desperate measures but those who did were 'resisting from the center of their experiences as women. More, they were implicitly calling to account the slaveholders, who protected the sexuality and revered the motherhood of white ladies while denying black women both' (Fox-Genovese 1988 p 324). Even though murders, suicides and infanticide were rare, they nevertheless embodied the 'core psychological dynamic of all resistance. The extreme forms captured the essence of self-definition: You cannot do that to me, whatever the price I must pay to prevent you' (ibid p 329). In the case of Fiji, despite the AGI reporting that the women were careless and indifferent as mothers, the fact of women killing their babies had been stated in the records. If necessary it could be brought out and used by the abolitionists in India who sometimes had access to the annual reports.

As has already been noted, the birth rate on Fiji's plantations was on average similar to other western and non-western countries during the period under discussion, implying that women in Fiji, despite their sub-human work conditions were neither under nor over-producing children. But the failure of planters to record births of the Indian infants who were born or who died on plantations led to the difficulty of the AGI in recording precise birth and death rates. It is impossible to say from the records at hand how many deaths of children were caused by mothers themselves. There were certainly many cases of 'accidental' deaths recorded by the Agent General of Immigration (see AGI Annual Reports 1888- 1910).

In spite of this weakness of the records however it is evident that women resisted exploitation by the planters and government by either resurrecting motherhood and wifehood, or denying them altogether, and they resisted efforts to domesticate them by expecting work which the CSR refused to provide in any permanent way. CSR eventually withdrew women from fieldwork altogether, and from holding leases except in exceptional circumstances. 'Free' Indian men prevented their wives and daughters from working in the public waged sphere. This was upheld and encouraged by people such as C.F. Andrews and W.W. Pearson who were followers of Gandhi's philosophies, and by the religious leaders who had begun visiting Fiji after 1910. The political and religious leaders from India had their own agendas, and they used the 'social and moral' condition of Indian women in Fiji to further their own political and economic aims against British colonisation of India. The part played by Indian women in aiding the anti-indenture and anti-British struggles in India has so far been under-emphasised in the literature. Although it is recognised that women's condition in Fiji served as the platform from which the proponents of Indian nationalism made their most powerful pleas for independence, this is not given the significance it deserves. At the time when liberal Indian men were agitating for social reform within British democracy in India, Indian women in Fiji were actively taking part in a worker struggle that had profound impact on the ability of the British to hold on to British India. Using their femininity and their worker consciousness, Indian women workers, through their activities against exploitation by white and black men, were able to make their own special contribution to end indenture, and thereby further the goals of the nationalists in their struggle for an independent India. The methods by which this was achieved is discussed next.

2. Women's Resistance and Indian Nationalism

The women who worked on Fiji's plantations had little expectation that their resistance to exploitation and oppression during all the years of indenture would eventually become a major reason for the militancy of Indian nationalists in India. In Fiji Indian women were merely expressing their protest as workers and their own militancy was targetted at both white and black men. The reaction to this protest by powerful men had the consequence of either relegating women to the

domestic arena permanently, or of encouraging them to leave for the town of Suva, where they entered virtually the only professions available to them as women- most were prostitutes or casual workers who, at the end of their indentures, were able to hire out their labour for a minimal wage. The 'free' Indians settled in various ghettos designed for their inhabitation such as Vatuwaqa, or intruded in the inner city hitherto fashionable suburb of Toorak, named after its upper class counterpart in Melbourne, Australia.

When Indian women were reacting against their domination and exploitation on plantations, the picture emerging of their situation as workers was expressed in terms of their status as 'victims'. The people who witnessed the lives and activities of women felt sorry for them and blamed the indenture system for permitting the gross exploitation of women to take place.

Apart from the Agent General of Immigration Annual Reports, which were detailed and statistical, there were few other ways of knowing what the actual conditions of workers were. The indenture system in all British colonies had already been questioned in the 1830s, well before emigration to Fiji but in the 1870s, after a series of scandals, the system once again came under review and some legislative changes made (Tinker op cit p 236). However between 1840 and 1900 there was little objection to indenture (ibid). The abolitionists had found a new interest in the Anti-Corn Law League which, although still linked to industrial plantation concerns, did not argue for a critical assessment of the condition of black workers. By the 1860s there was little interest maintained in the plight of the coolies, although prior to this some members of the Anti-Slavery Society had kept vigilance of death rates and taskwork on plantations in the British colonies. It was not until the 1870s that many Europeans realised that the condition of coolies on plantations was similar to that of slaves (ibid p 240). A Royal Commission formed to inquire into the conditions at Demerara revealed that the Indians were being treated extremely badly, and they had shown considerable fortitude under conditions of extreme hardship as workers (ibid p 241). The commissioners recommended policy and legislative changes (ibid p 242). At this time it also came to light that women and children were being kidnapped in

India for the colonies (ibid p 244-245). There was an immediate scandal and many took the side of the labourers. Recruiting from Calcutta began to be hindered by the new Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, George Campbell who placed Indian interests above all else (ibid p 245). The West India merchants were displeased and accused him of hindering the supply of coolies to the sugar plantations (ibid p 246).

Although it was recognised by officials in India that the system was seriously at fault in terms of the rights of workers, they were reluctant to probe too deeply into the problems (ibid p 247). This was shared by Whitehall even though evidence was accumulating as to the abuses of planters who were often accused of acts of barbarism (such as tying up Indians to verandah posts as they were flogged) (ibid). Individual Governors of the Indian states began to detail serious incidents which breached the labour code, and eventually the Government of India decided to register a protest and threatened to stop emigration (ibid and p 248). But Whitehall officials were still lax and left the monitoring to individual zealous governors and administrators who amassed a sufficient amount of evidence to seriously question planters' inhumane practices (ibid p 249).

Publication of reports on British Guiana and Mauritius brought the attention of the Anti-Slavery Society back to the question of indenture. Members questioned individual governors and administrators, many of whom made the excuse that Indians were earning more in the colonies than they would have in India. Other administrators wanted to end indenture and introduce a contingent of 'free' men (ibid p 253). As Campbell put it: 'The "indenture" system is perhaps a necessity...but we, I think, are bound to insist- first that conditions are fulfilled and protection afforded during indenture; and second that after expiration of the indenture the immigrants shall have all the privileges of free men....Much migration of this kind [as to Burma, Ceylon and the Straits Settlements] is quite free, and free migration is certainly beneficial. Sometimes one could wish there were more of it' (ibid). Campbell was expressing the sentiments of many of the time that bonded labour would have to give way to free waged work. Campbell concluded his despatch with:

'Above all things, we must confidently expect, as an indispensable condition of proposed arrangements, that the colonial laws and their administration will be such that Indian settlers who have completed the terms of service to which they agreed....will be in all respects free men (my emphasis), with privileges no whit inferior to those of any other class of Her Majesty's subjects resident in the colonies' (ibid p 254).

Thus the Indians were to become free after their indentures ended with the same rights of citizenship as the planters. This was to be a point of dissension after the end of indenture in 1920 when Indians began agitating for political representation (ibid).

Meanwhile in Fiji Gordon had already applied for Indian coolies and the laws under which this was administered had already undergone some reforms as a consequence of problems in other colonies. Legislative changes specific to Fiji were enacted in 1891 and 1917, although various amendments were instituted in the intervening years. When in 1908 indenture in general was being questioned once again, the documents from Fiji formed part of the general literature on administration of indenture. In this year the criticism against indenture was expressed in terms of the barring of Indians from citizenship in the self-governing parts of the Empire, and the shortage of labour within India itself which had been pointed out 'by all sections of industry' (Gillion op cit p 164).

In 1909 the Sanderson Committee was set up to consider the general question of emigration. Committee members decided that indentured emigration was not 'open to serious objection in the interests of the immigrant labourer', and that Indians were a great asset in the colonies to which they were indentured. Furthermore indentured servitude was the only 'practicable form of emigration....on any considerable scale' to the colonies (ibid and 165). The committee specifically mentioned Fiji in its report, urging that more tact should be used in the treatment of immigrants, with fewer prosecutions, for without Indians the Colony must have remained 'in a state of comparative stagnation' (ibid). The Government of India

welcomed the findings of the Sanderson Report, but other people were also at work undermining the system of indentured servitude. Indian lawyer Gandhi, who had lived and practised law in South Africa had brought to the attention of the Indians in India the situation of the Natal Indians. From 1910, in response to the call of leaders such as Gokhale and Gandhi, Indians took up the cause for the end of indenture, and the Indian press, particularly the Calcutta Modern Review, made it a crusade. The system of indentured labour became one of the most important causes in the Indian's fight against the British for independence. In order to understand the processes and the political platform from which the independence fight was launched, a brief outline of the history of Indian nationalism is pertinent at this point.

(i). Indian Nationalist Politics - a movement for reform

India's nationalist struggle against British occupation has a long and varied history which is deeply rooted in British occupation itself. However the diverse ways in which it was expressed by nationalists themselves came from the complex economic and social base which was essentially pre-British. The extreme social, economic and religious background of the Indians in general presented a peculiar setting for the growth of nationalism in India (Desai 1966). Indian nationalism emerged under the history of the Indians' political subjugation by the British and flourished within the context of the changing economic conditions, centralisation of the state, modern communication and technology and western education (ibid p 6).

The political and administrative unification of India by the British over several centuries led eventually to the rise of new social classes which had been unknown in India in the past. These classes emerged as a consequence of new education during British rule and was directly contingent upon the formation of the new capitalist economic structure fostered by the British. The emergence of such new classes was not uniform across India; as the new social economy was introduced by the British unevenly so occurred the development of different classes of people. In Bengal for example there emerged the class of people known as the zemindars and another class, the tenants. It was here and in Bombay that the first jute and cotton mills were

established which led to the emergence of other classes of people, such as the industrialists and the proletariat. These centres were then also known for their educational and administrative institutions, thus leading to the emergence of the 'middle classes' including clerks (civil servants), bank officers, teachers and other professional classes. Eventually as the British occupation of India became uniform, these new classes emerged on a national scale, often cutting across the pre-capitalist caste boundaries. Thus Brahmins became educated, and the Banyas, who were previously traders, became the new capitalists (ibid pp 174-175).

The new social classes were different from the old pre-capitalist classes of India. The industrialist, the factory proletarian, the civil servant all had common problems that stemmed from British occupation. At the same time each group of people had interests in common with other people of the same class, so that solidarity developed among the proletariat, and among the bourgeoisie. Other interest groups, such as women's groups and students also organised in terms of national concerns. But all were aware that there was a need to form organisations among Indian people as a whole in order to advance their own personal politics in terms of the 'nation'. Thus was born the Indian nationalist movement, which was in opposition to British occupation of India, but which would never have emerged had it not been for British occupation. There were two corresponding nationalist movements in India- one that was organised in terms of class interests (eg proletarians, and landlords, or capitalists) and another that was organised to fight foreign domination. This latter took the form of Indian nationalist movement for Home Rule, Dominion Status and Complete Independence (ibid p 218). However each class of people had their own vision about India after independence.

Within the general Indian nationalist movement which called for an end to foreign domination, the movement for emancipation of women was one of the strongest. The capitalist economy that was being nurtured in India was based upon liberal principles that recognised individual equality and contractual freedom of the individual. Under such circumstances it was difficult to relegate women to the status prescribed for them from Vedic times. In terms of the 'woman question'

there were several archaic practices that were being targetted for reform: suttee and prevention of widow remarriage; purdah of women; child marriage; and temple prostitution. Women also fought for the right to education, the right to enter politics (defining themselves as citizens) and civic life. However only women with certain wealth and privilege were able to demand these 'individual' rights. Less privileged women of India were less likely to ask for education, voting rights and equal pay when they and their husbands were permanently relegated to a condition of servitude which many of the middle and upper class women themselves perpetuated through their refusal to examine critically the class and caste origins of such practices as untouchability and the living conditions of the working classes. Middle class Indian men and women were making the same errors that white sufferagettes in the United States made when the question of the vote for black men arose. (White women such as Susan B. Anthony feared that the 'Negro' would get the vote before them, see Davis op cit Chapter 7). However this did not prevent the lower and working class women from taking their place in the nationalist struggle. They organised strikes and petitions and became active members of trade unions and other political organisations, sometimes in opposition to the middle classes.

The formation of the Indian National Congress was a product of the years of nationalist resistance. Founded in 1885 by liberal Indian intelligentsia and supported by local men of commerce, the Congress represented the first real emergence of a national organisation of Indians who were fighting British occupation. It was also supported by liberal Englishmen such as Hume, Wedderburn and Henry Cotton (Desai 1966 p 320). The Indian and English liberals had faith in British democracy and planned to retain democratic principles after independence. Despite their support for British Democracy, they infused national consciousness among all Indians. They did not critique India's position as a colony of British capitalism, and failed to realise that Britain's appropriation of wealth in India would not easily be given up. It was not long before some of these early liberals of the Indian National Congress realised that little economic and political progress was to be made if they continued along the path they had taken. This was realised by some members of the

Congress only and within it, a new group of militants emerged at the end of the nineteenth century who used the effect of several natural disasters to undermine British rule in the eyes of the people. The high-handed administrative methods of the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, did little to eliminate the anger and resistance of emergent Indian leaders.

The strategy of the militants was unique. They invoked the myths and legends of India's past and upheld ancient values in order to infuse a sense of pride and identity among the people. They refused to idealise the west, but idealised India instead. They propounded that Indians had a special spirituality not shared by others and took into account the parallel religious nationalist movement that had emerged with the political movement in the previous century. Thus nationalism became expressed in religious and mystical terms in order to free the country from domination. The militant nationalists' first activities were to propagate 'swadeshi' and boycott. 'Swadeshi' was designed to generate self-help schemes, and the boycott movement was intended to undermine British prestige.

It was not long before there occurred a major split between the militants and the liberals within the Congress. This occurred in 1907 and was expressed in ideological terms. After this year British repression increased and government passed the Seditious Meetings Act in 1907 and the Indian Press Act in 1910. The government also sought to pacify the nationalists with reforms, such as limited political representation but the Home Rule movement gathered strength and by 1916 the two wings of the Congress attempted to unite but by 1918 the liberals had left the Congress and formed another party.

Gandhi is specifically known for the non-co-operation movement within the Indian National Congress. As a leader Gandhi was unmatched by any other in India. He evolved a programme of struggle that involved the masses and his calls to boycott all British industry was heeded by the millions. Indian people willingly courted gaol and British military violence. Gandhi also had the effect of mobilising women, who refused to buy foreign garments, making home-spun instead, thus threatening the very foundations of British industry in India and Britain. Under

Gandhi's leadership peasants refused to pay landtax, students boycotted educational institutions and lawyers the judiciary.

Quite apart from being a good strategist, Gandhi was also a social reformer. His speeches abounded with 'blazing moral indignation' at such unfair practices as untouchability and social injustice and he appealed most immediately to the upper caste Hindus who took it upon themselves to fight a crusade against some elements of the caste system and social inequality. In the end Gandhi's leadership had the effect of drawing India inexorably towards independence and by 1920 the Civil Disobedience Movement was at its height. But it was an independence struggle that did little to question the basis of the social inequalities that had been festering in India since pre-British times. Since the struggle was being waged by the educated and merchant class of people there was little chance that the fundamental social problems and their causes would be discussed. Gandhi's solution was to uplift the social situation of untouchables within the caste system, in opposition to the leader of the Untouchables, B.R. Ambedkar, who wanted to demolish the caste system altogether. Gandhi wished merely to replace the term 'Untouchable' with the term Harijan, or 'children of God' and did little to attack the root of the problem which was caste itself (Hiro: 1975). Gandhi's view of women was similar- he wished to uplift the status of women without questioning their unpaid work in the home for husbands and children.

Gandhi's strategy for independence was acceptable to the British. As Toynbee has recently pointed out, Gandhi made it 'impossible for the British to go on ruling India, but at the same time he made it possible for us to abdicate without rancour and without dishonour....He taught mankind a moral lesson' (Fiji Times Oct 2 1989 p 7). Gandhi's spiritual message was able to lift the moral stance of the upper classes, and compelled them to reform the situation of those less privileged. But like all social reformers, Gandhian spirituality and reformism could not overthrow the very basis of social inequality- the appropriation of surplus wealth of the underprivileged by the privileged.

Gandhi's views of women informed many of his policies and strategies which later impacted upon Indian women in Fiji. 'The image of the new woman that he wanted to help create was deeply influenced and coloured by the kind of cultural and emotional environment in which he grew up' (Kishwar: XXVIII 1986 p 43). An upper caste Indian, Gandhi had impeccable credentials and had been educated (as other children of the Indian elite) in England. In South Africa in 1913 Gandhi had realised the power of women when he saw the extent of their bravery in the battle against the Black Act. Women's impassioned pleas brought out the miners in their thousands to protest against exploitation. By 1921 in India Gandhi was already tapping into women's potential to put a new moral force into the general movement for independence. Gandhi resurrected the ancient images of Sita, Damyanti and Draupadi, but he chose to endow them with meanings that they had never been designed to bear (ibid p 44). For example, Sita the faithful, docile wife became a revolutionary figure who wore only homespun and was no slave of Rama. Draupadi was seen as the 'symbol of "robust independence" who could bend even "mighty Bhima himself to her impervious will"'. Thus the ideal ancient women of India were re-constructed in order to serve as symbols for the emerging new womanhood for the purposes of reformism. Without changing their traditional role as wives and mothers Gandhi was able to make women an important social base for the nationalist movement (ibid p 45).

When Gandhi was visualising a new era for all of India, he was also taking into account the Indians of the colonies. Having been a colonial Indian himself Gandhi was anxious that their situation would not be marginalised in the fight for independence of the Indian sub-continent. Between 1913 and 1920 Gandhi sent many of his trusted henchmen such as C.F. Andrews and D.M. Manilal to other British Colonies to find out the situation of Indians there. One of Gandhi's most significant platforms in the fight for 'Home Rule' was the indentured labour system in the colonies. Since Fiji appeared to have the worst plantation conditions out of all the other colonies, the followers of Gandhi targetted their anger and political passions at this Colony. This was aided by publications from Fiji which described in detail, and usually from first hand experience, the condition of Indian workers there.

The publication of the Reverend J.W Burton's book, The Fiji of Today, and his pamphlet Our Indian Work in Fiji in 1910 brought to the attention of the British and Indian public the conditions of workers in Fiji. Although there was no immediate outcry, the book was put aside for later reference. The publication of the Sanderson Committee's Report had meanwhile revived the interest of the Anti-slavists, and on the urgings of the Colonial Office an amending ordinance was passed in Fiji in 1912 which eliminated the penalty for imprisonment and extensions of service except for serious offences such as repeated desertions and absence (Gillion op cit p 167). Although the planters fought the amendments various changes such as the improvement of kitchens, latrines and water supply were instituted. The officials in Fiji were aware that liberals in India and Britain were opposed to indenture. They realised that this had probably occurred as a consequence of attention being brought to overtasking, desertions, frequent absenteeism and the high death rate of women and children on plantations. This had been reported (with suitable quotations from the labourers themselves) in all the publications about indenture in Fiji. Burton's book had been written in consultation with an educated Indian labourer, Totaram Sanadhya, whose personal experiences and observations, especially of women's condition, was later published privately. However, humanitarianism within England cannot be overlooked as a reason for the international criticism of indenture; the Liberal Party had come into office in 1905, and there was growing support for the labour movement in Europe as well as the colonies (ibid p 168). As Gillion puts it, indenture was being defined as a system of 'necessary evil', even in Fiji itself (ibid p 169). In 1912 Gokhale moved a motion in the Imperial Legislative Council for total abolition, pointing out in detail that indenture was fraudulently based and that it was accompanied by frightful immorality. His motion was supported by all Indian members of Council who pointed out that there was a labour shortage in India itself (ibid p 169-170). Thus the questions about the end of indenture, quite apart from the condition of the workers, was influenced by the emergent labour problems for the new local Indian industries. The British Government representatives argued that abuses could be remedied by legislation but they lost the vote, and

consequently much more serious notice was taken of Indian opinion of indenture (ibid).

In 1912 and 1913 the aspect of the system that was attacked most vehemently by Indian officials in India was the existence of penal sanctions for labour offences. It was held that since the penal sanctions were not written in the contract the labourers signed in India, these were tantamount to slavery, and to fraud as well (ibid p 170). This opinion caused much alarm among the Emigration Agents as well as the planters and individual colonial governments in the colonies. Already there was a reluctance on the part of the Indians to emigrate and if they knew about the penal sanctions there would be even less encouragement to leave for the colonies. But the Indian government's attempts to keep this question under wraps failed and questions were being asked publicly in England and India about the sanctions. Many already assumed that the recommendation to eliminate the sanctions had been accepted.

In Fiji CSR recognised the danger that unless reforms were instituted the entire labour system would have to come to an end. CSR officials insisted that without indenture the company could not survive in Fiji. Its officers Knox and Thomas Hughes made their own separate representations to India and England but the final decision regarding the elimination of penal sanctions was deferred pending a report from two commissioners appointed to look into the conditions in four British colonies. Meanwhile, CSR, sensitive to the possibility that indenture would soon come to an end, devised alternative means to plant and harvest cane. The officials began their settlement scheme in earnest, organising it so that it ran parallel to indentured labour.

The abolitionists concentrated their attention on Fiji because at this time Fiji was importing most of the Indians going overseas (ibid p 172 and notes). The Indians thought that Fiji had the greatest need for reform and liberal attention. Once Burton's book was published in India, and another moving account by Miss Hannah Dudley, a Methodist Missionary teacher also made available, the Indians in India began to concentrate their attention on Fiji in earnest. An article describing the alleged rape of Kunti from Fiji was also published in 1913,

and the opposition to indenture snowballed. The Indian government asked the two commissioners to investigate allegations and in 1913 James McNeill and Chimman Lal arrived in Fiji. When the report came out, both commissioners professed satisfaction with the conditions in Fiji but argued that the wages were too low and that the proportion of females to males should be raised to 50 percent. They also recommended that the commutation of a limited number of indentured people should be permitted, and settlement on the land, Indian education and better medical facilities should be given more encouragement (McNeill and Chimman Lal Report op cit). McNeill had discussions with Knox and Hughes of the CSR but their warnings that two of the proposed changes, namely penal clauses and the abolition of the system by payment of a commission, would end emigration altogether went unheeded. CSR realised that Indian officials were generally opposed to emigration for different reasons and that the situation for them in Fiji was grave.

McNeill and Chimman Lal's Report was hardly critical of the situation in Fiji. They reported favourably, arguing that on the whole the system was advantageous to worker and colony. Although they did not specifically mention the social and moral situation of the workers which the Government of India particularly wanted to hear, several comments were offered on the situation of women. The nurseries for children were approved, and so were the new kitchens, but they recommended that pregnant and nursing women be given rations, pointing out that deaths of infants were caused by 'congenital debility....improper feeding and general want of attention' (ibid p 249). They also recommended that women should not be allowed to work so long as they were unable to 'cook for their husbands' on their return from the field (ibid). They also argued that relations between the employers and their married workers would improve if families were given plots of land and a separate house in the last half of their indentured servitude (ibid p 257).

In a separate section on indentured women, the commissioners recommended that a better class of women could be encouraged (ibid p 314). 'Under the existing rule recruiters must accept such women as they can get. As young girl children do not count towards the

percentage and as all ineffectives are costly to emigrate and to maintain on an estate, single women are now in more demand than as a family including small girl children. If young girls count towards the percentage a married couple with two or more girl children will be very desirable recruits. There will be no need to recruit disreputable women and in a very short time the disproportion between the adult men and women will be further reduced. There would soon be a substantial and steady increase in the number of marriageable women, while the professional prostitute would tend to disappear' (ibid p 315). They also recommended that married quarters built should be 'fenced off' and would be out of bounds for unmarried men. In other words the chastity of the married woman, as property of the man, would be protected.

McNeill and Chimman Lal also pointed out that suicides on the estates were caused by 'domestic trouble' and 'jealousy', particularly among the Madrassis and not the conditions under which they worked for over the past few years there had been fewer prosecutions, and an improvement in medical care and sanitary conditions (ibid pp 317-318). They suggested that in Fiji the disproportion of the sexes may have an effect on the suicide rate (ibid p 319). Pointing out that the immorality of the women was largely the cause of the trouble on plantations, the commissioners recommended that married couples should be recruited.. 'The only practical remedy for the evils existing is to increase the proportion of marriageable women and, therefore the number of marriages' (ibid p 320). This had the desirable effect in India- the question of women's morality on Fiji's plantations particularly was to be the focus of the anti-indenture agitators. By 1914 the Government of India was seriously considering abolition.

In 1914 the publication of Reverend Piper's letter in the Calcutta Statesman, as well as the campaign of former indentured worker-turned nationalist, Totaram Sanadhya gripped public imagination in India. Piper talked of the terrible conditions and immorality, and Sanadya talked of personal accounts, especially of the two women Kunti and Naraini who had been particular victims of planter cruelty. The personal reports enabled the vocal opposition to gather momentum. An Indian barrister had already arrived in Fiji under the sponsorship of

Gandhi to look after Indian interests. This had occurred at the request of some Indian men in Fiji, who being of high caste and educated, had already been meeting in Suva for some time. The correspondence between Gandhi and the men in Fiji was read by Manilal, an Indian barrister in Mauritius who had fought for Indian rights since 1907(Gillion op cit p 158). He agreed to go to Fiji and arrived in 1912.

Manilal's impact on Fiji was unmatched by any other Indian leader before or since. From the beginning he represented Indian interests with passion and a keen command and appreciation of the position of both the CSR and the government. Manilal recognised certain aspects of disunity between the CSR officials and the government and exploited this to full advantage. He also alienated the local European community by bringing with him his French mistress from Mauritius, Berthe Cabrie, whom he later abandoned in favour of an Indian wife, daughter of one of Gandhi's closest friends, and a feminist. Jaikumari Devi's impact upon the Indian women in Fiji will be discussed in the next chapter.

Manilal's arrival in Fiji provided the Indians there with the support they needed. Manilal sent off correspondence regularly to India (notwithstanding government censorship of all his mail), suggesting that a different class of emigrants be encouraged to come- the traders, craftsmen and professionals (ibid p 159). He defended indentured Indians in court for a very small fee, and published the first Indian journal, the Indian Settler. He also organised petitions to the Indian government asking for a reform of the marriage laws, the non-enforcement of the death penalty for men who had killed their women out of jealousy and political representation for male Indians without restrictions of literacy (ibid and p 160). Most Indians supported Manilal himself as the Indian representative but the government refused to appoint him, instead choosing a long-term government spy, the relatively unknown Badri Maharaj. By this means the government used the 'divide and rule' tactic to split the Indians who, as both indentured and free men, were beginning to organise effectively.

But even without an official platform Manilal was able to represent Indian interests. He consistently sent information to India which was distributed to all the villages and towns. The focus was that indenture was an affront to India's pride (ibid p 175). As the war approached the anti-indenture feeling gathered momentum. In November 1914 the Government of India suspended emigration, commandeering the emigrant ships for battle duty. Despite this CSR attempted to charter its own vessels and initiated many improvements in the conditions of workers, entailing stricter supervision of healthcare and work conditions. The power to imprison for labour offences was completely eliminated in 1915, and provision was made for the education of the children of indentured people. The terms 'coolie' and 'free' were outlawed.

However, the 'problem' of women remained. All other conditions had improved by 1915 but the 'immorality' of women was still a matter for concern among the Indian liberals and their European counterparts. On his first visit to Fiji the close confidant and friend of Gandhi, Charles Freer Andrews, was shocked. His liberal and moral sensibilities as a friend of the elite, polite and educated India society were offended by what he saw in Fiji. He condemned the system for demoralising the women and preventing them from being properly married during their indentureship. Andrews was an upright Christian and he considered the plight of the indentured Indians as his special mission from God. He concentrated on Fiji because the worst reports had come from there, but he brought to his analysis his vast experience among Indians in South Africa as well as India. He read all the reports and books on Fiji and quickly became well-informed. Andrews was asked officially to prepare a document preparing for the end of emigration and the abolition of indenture, and his detailed notes, compiled from his first visit to Fiji, were made into an extensive document in which he recommended that the indenture system be replaced by an emigration system whereby the emigrants would not be bound by penal clauses, nor be compelled to work for one plantation only. Andrews was recommending the emigration of 'free' waged labourers for Fiji.

Andrews and his friend W.W. Pearson, also a missionary, visited Fiji in 1915 and the two men concentrated mostly on the social and moral evils of the Fiji plantations. In their report, Andrews and Pearson returned time and again to the question of the immorality of women, the class of women that emigrated, the hostility towards women on the plantations which culminated in their murders and the suicides of men, the lack of marriage regulations, the neglect of children by their mothers, and the high incidences of venereal diseases, which were in turn blamed on the immorality of the women. These were considered quite apart from questions about the lack of franchise of Indian men and the education and health of all Indians. They recommended that coolie houses should be immediately demolished, riddled as they were with vice, and that immoral relations between Indian women and European men be stamped out altogether. They also recommended that matrons should be in charge of hospitals where women were admitted and that gambling, drinking and watching of picture shows also be prohibited. They also condemned the bartering of female children, proposed new marriage laws and the abolition of the hut tax (which led to overcrowdedness). Finally they recommended that Indians should settle on land which they could claim for their own use, urging the government to advance its Land Settlement Scheme for Indians. After a period of nearly forty years of indenture, some official recognition of the Indians' condition and welfare was taking place. Unfortunately however, the improvement of the condition of Indian men was dependent on the withdrawal of women from paid employment. Thus Andrews and Pearson, like the missionaries and reformists in India, failed to grasp the complexity of women's work in Fiji, and the extent of the damage caused to Indian women as a consequence of their compulsory domestication.

The reports of Andrews and Pearson was yet another nail in the coffin of indenture. The publication of the reports caused mass demonstrations against indenture in India, eventually leading to a motion in the Imperial Legislative Council for abolition. Andrews took this to be a personal achievement, writing.. 'We feel today that God had overwhelmed us with His goodness in allowing us to have our share in this great fact. It means the taking away of one more abomination from God's earth' (ibid p 181). But it was unclear exactly when the

abolition was to come into effect. In Fiji CSR and government accepted the news but immediately began to agitate for new emigrants to be imported under different conditions. Pending this, recruitment continued until this was again brought to Andrews' attention. He had assumed that abolition would have immediate effect and was dismayed to find that recruitment would continue for a further five years. In no time at all he had again whipped up public opposition to indenture and called upon important Indian leaders to make political speeches and write petitions. Indian women joined the struggle in huge numbers. Women leaders spoke passionately about the indentured women in Fiji, condemning the threat to Indian womanhood and chastity implying that their own morality was coming under threat as a consequence of women's treatment and molestation in the colony. In the words of poet and nationalist Sarojini Naidu, speaking from a public platform...

'Let the blood of your hearts blot out the shame that your women have suffered abroad. The words that you have heard tonight must have kindled within you a raging fire. Men of India let that be the funeral pyre of the indenture system....Because I am a woman, and though you may feel the dishonour that is offered to your mothers and sisters, I feel the dishonour offered to me in the dishonour to my sex....I ask you in the name of those two brothers, who preferred to save the honour of their family and their religion, in the blood of their sister, rather than let her chastity be polluted' (cited in Andrews op cit).

A curious phenomenon had occurred. The resistance of Indian women on Fiji's plantations had the effect, in various ways, of publicising the conditions of all workers. But when the liberals visited Fiji they could see quite clearly that women's condition was much worse than that of men. Women were poorer, they had less food, their children were ill and dying, and they were in paid employment of a dubious nature in order to make ends meet. But the Indian nationalists had come from a political background that had wished to replace foreign ownership of India by local entrepreneurship and politics. The proponents of independence in India were the educated elite whose personal aspirations had been thwarted in terms of political representation in their own country, and merchants whose industrial aspirations were limited by the British monopoly over production and

manufacturing. The nationalist struggle that emerged therefore was against foreign rule. There were few members of the political and economic elite who seriously questioned the material basis of colonisation by the British. One or two (e.g. Manilal) called themselves socialists, but they were mostly social reformers rather than socialists and were unable to question the basis of the caste/class divisions in India. Had they done this, the very foundations of the nationalist struggle would have been undermined for reference could not have been made to the ancient Sanskrit kings and queens whose life epitomised the subjugation of those of low caste. Thus the caste and class based origins of Indian nationalism would have been exposed, and the struggle for freedom would have been fought on different grounds- that which eradicated not only foreign domination but Indian upper caste and male domination as well.

It was this class and caste-based origins of Indian nationalism that had the effect of containing Indian women in Fiji. When Andrews, Pearson, Manilal, Naidu and Gandhi condemned the indenture system for its treatment of women, they condemned it on the grounds that women were not allowed to 'keep their chastity' (presumably for their husbands only) on the plantations, and they were not able to be married or be domesticated, with nothing but religion to keep them happy and busy. Their speeches about chastity and honour of women may have been made with the best intentions but their stance showed that they completely misunderstood the status and work of women in Fiji for the past thirty five years. They attempted to impose middle class, upper caste Indian values on women who had been workers in India and were workers in Fiji.

The women in Fiji were caught in the crossfire between Indian nationalists and British rulers in India and Fiji. Their work and resistance was being publicly acknowledged but at the cost of their autonomy and independence as women. Their opposition to the CSR was celebrated and supported with passion, but their resistance to Indian men was being curtailed. Their fights against exploitation by the CSR were being publicised and made heroic, but in their relations with Indian men, their wings were being clipped. This period was trying for Indian women, and riddled with tension and massive contradictions

because the rules for their behaviour were being set down and institutionalised. They quickly discovered that it was appropriate to fight against white men but unseemly to challenge Indian men. Collectively, they were caught up in the series of events and complex politics of the era.

Most Indian women watched the activities in India with a sense of wonder. Their chastity was being protected but not their rights as workers. In the national agitation that followed, Gandhi decided that the question of indenture was most suitable for his first mass non-resistance demonstration and announced that the ships would be picketed unless the system was ended (Gillion op. cit p 183). The Imperial Government in India realised that it could no longer slither out of the morass. It was being attacked from all fronts. In a 1916 speech by the Viceroy of India, questions were raised about the necessity of sending emigrants overseas when they could obtain better wages in the jute industry of Eastern Bengal;

'It seems rather absurd to find a man going to Fiji for a wage of 26s. a month with rice at two and one half seers to the rupee, when he can readily earn 6s. or 7s. a week during the jute season in Eastern Bengal with rice selling at a third of the price prevailing in Fiji, with the additional advantage that he can, if he likes, with far greater ease, take his family with him to add to his earnings than in the case of the distant Colonies. It is clear, then, that the coolie himself does not stand to gain very much by emigration' (ABL 142/3144).

The second point of the Viceroy's speech pointed out that the sex disproportion was serious..'This, of course, is not a matter which arises out of the question of indenture. What we are, however, concerned with is the effect which this sex ratio has on the conditions under which the indentured coolie has perforce to live during the period of his indenture'. The Viceroy attributed the high death rate to the high incidence of suicide which he said was most likely caused by 'domestic relations' predisposing 'an unhappy man to suicide'. He also mentioned that educated Indians saw indenture as a 'badge of helotry' (ibid).

The Viceroy's speech gave approval to the termination of indenture on the grounds that workers were needed in India, and the immorality of Indian women was giving rise to the high death rate of Indian men. A year later, on 12 March 1917 the government stopped all recruiting for the duration of the war and two years afterwards (ibid). Although a different assisted system of emigration was planned, the opposition of Andrews and Gandhi to this scheme on the grounds that India's self-respect and dignity were at stake ensured that the moves by government would be highly unpopular. Another visit to Fiji by Andrews in 1917 was designed to discredit Fiji as a destination for future settlement (Gillion op cit p 184). He found the condition of labourers worse than before, with wartime prices of foodstuffs exceeding the wages that the workers were getting. In his second report Andrews was even more scathing of the conditions in Fiji. He also gathered support from women's organisations in Australasia and proposed the recruitment of European women doctors, nurses and matrons for Fiji. Many of these volunteer women were only too glad to come to Fiji to help out the 'poor Indian women' but upon arrival found that there was no infrastructure to accommodate their work. Because the government and the CSR were both opposed to Andrews and did their best to condemn his revelations, they were not overly enthusiastic about the female mission workers and nurses who arrived to do social work among the women.

Meanwhile at the Interdepartmental Conference in London, at which CSR sent observers, a scheme of 'aided colonisation' was agreed to but there was so much anti-indenture feeling expressed against it that the new scheme never got off the ground. In September 1918 the Imperial Legislative Council decided to negotiate with the Fiji Government for an early release of Fiji indentured immigrants, and on January 1 1920 the last indentures were cancelled.

Indian women's resistance thus had the effect of bringing to the attention of Indian nationalists the plight of the labourers in the colonies. But since the Indian nationalists were motivated by liberal concerns, they were more concerned about the moral and social problems of Indians as victims of British colonisation. And, from the evidence

of annual reports, as well as personal accounts and travel documents, there were no greater victims in Fiji than Indian women. Gandhi had already in India attempted to uplift the moral standing of both women and the Untouchables by placing them on pedestals for hero-worship as the downtrodden of India. With the help of other social reformers he extended this principle to Fiji, where the ability of the women to choose their sex partners freely and without sanction was seen as an affront to the dignity and self-respect of all India. Rather than blame women directly however, these reformers blamed the system, and in so doing, forced the 'system' (which incorporated aspects such as opportunity for work, wages and legislation) to place women in situations where their chastity could be protected. On the plantations where women worked for a wage this could not be done because women had a public life. The solution was to remove women from public into private life so that their chastity and 'honour' could be preserved in the image of the ideal woman 'Sita'. That this was impractical for women workers was never considered. Fiji women had worked in the waged sphere for over thirty years, and suddenly they were expected to conform to the ideal of Indian womanhood, such as chastity and obedience, which had been constructed by men in India. The tensions suddenly faced by women were immense. While work for women could be eliminated in legislation and practice, there was no alternative income for women at all. There was little they could do except accept domesticity. But there were many women who refused to be confined to home and hearth. These were women who had become free workers in towns and for whom the war years, with food shortages, had been particularly difficult. These women had been unable to agitate for higher wages and better work conditions while indenture was still in force. But the minute indenture ended in January 1920, these women went to work. With the assistance of one or two powerful women leaders, the Indian women of Fiji planned and executed the most militant worker strike ever held in Fiji. This is discussed in the next chapter.

Summary

In this chapter I have argued that women's resistance on plantations during their indentured servitude was articulated on the grounds of their exploitation. If women were exploited as workers, they resisted as workers and as women. Since worker resistance was limited on

plantations due to plantation structural conditions, women were more likely to protest in terms of their femininity. But women's resistance was expressed not just in terms of their work capacities. Women were also the targets of male violence. Many attempts were also made to confine their sexuality and independence to the sphere of domesticity. In this case women resisted as waged workers. Their ability to earn a living despite their low participation in the work force through prostitution and other means threatened male attempts to domesticate them.

The tensions that emerged on plantations were difficult for everyone to deal with. Women were recruited as workers, but their usefulness stemmed from their domestic training. But even as they entered the sphere of paid work, they began to demand their rights as workers under contract. The working lives of women undermined the very nature of plantation authority and plantation production. Employers resolved this contradiction by forcing women into the domestic arena and by refusing them paid work. Colonial officials enacted marriage legislation in order to encourage more permanent unions between women and men. Between 1891 and 1918 five Indian Marriage Ordinance amendments were passed by parliament. Men attempted to resolve it through the domestication of women which was kept in place by male violence and in extreme cases, by murder.

In order to retain some measure of autonomy and to survive, women resolved these contradictions in ways that were unique to them personally. Some chose to become wives and mothers, others preferred to continue working until legislation and male practices inhibited them to such a degree that they had to succumb. By 1921 only a small number of women were in the paid workforce. Most were engaged in 'domestic duties'. The unique female resistance on Fiji's plantations during indenture was forgotten, made deliberately invisible through legislation, lack of paid work and male violence.

The resistance of women on Fiji's plantations had the effect of bringing to the attention of the Indian nationalist leaders the plight of all workers in Fiji. The nationalists realised that in indenture they had one of their strongest weapons, and that furthermore this

could be wielded most successfully by pointing out the morality issue. They targetted their attention at the incidences of 'immorality' of women, pointing out that since women were not permitted to marry or have children within wedlock because of the the workings of the 'system', the system was at fault. With one stroke they condemned the indenture system to extinction and Indian women in Fiji to domestication.

CHAPTER 8 WOMEN AND THE 1920 COST OF LIVING STRIKE: A WORKER'S FIGHT

The 1920 Cost of Living strike in Fiji did not occur merely as a result of a series of coincidences. The Indian workers in Fiji had been planning this revolt against exploitation and oppression for a long time, so long in fact that the idea of it had become generational, being passed down from parent to child, and from indentured servant to 'free' labourer, by angry, bitter and pained men and women. They hated their exploitation in Fiji and could not wait to pay the system back. But during their individual periods of servitude, and even while indenture as a method of labour organisation and exploitation was still in force, there was no chance of a revolt, and so the Indians had become devious, and sometimes even cunning. The Indian indentured labourers had learnt very quickly how to work out their aggression in other more meaningful ways than strike action in order to deal quite successfully with inept officials seeing out the last years of the British Empire. It was this ability to refrain from working while giving the impression that work was being done that enabled them to built a resistance on all fronts; as waged workers, as canefarmers and as the middleclass. All forms of resistance, though similar in aim, were quite different in method. This sometimes led to battles within factions and within classes- within the Indian community itself.

This chapter first of all examines the resistance of working women to low wages and the high cost of living in 1920, two weeks after indenture was formally abolished by an Order in the Imperial Legislative Council in India. It is argued that women instigated, planned and led the strike of workers in the main town of Suva and that they also planned the series of strikes which gripped the cane growing areas of Rewa and Navua run by the CSR and the Vancouver Fiji Sugar Co. Furthermore, it is held that the strike by women was so well planned and executed that middle class men also found the courage to register protests regarding their lack of voting rights and other middle class concerns. For more than a month, over January and February 1920, the eastern side of the island of Viti Levu fermented with worker agitation and unrest. The women's protest, specifically targetted at the low wages and the high food prices has parallels

elsewhere, but can be especially compared with the strike by Jewish housewives against the high cost of living in New York City in 1917 (Frank 1985).

The leadership of the 1920 Cost of Living and Wages Strike was taken up by women who used men to help them get their grievances heard. Women led the deputation to the Governor, forcing him to agree to all of their demands, and urged the men to stay out of work. The men were so intimidated by the women, that even the unwilling ones joined the strike which began to snowball after just a few days. The strike action was so powerful that the Governor had to call for military help from the Australian and New Zealand Navy. With this back-up government officials were able to use force to subdue the strikers. Eventually the main leaders were deported from the Colony, and personal rivalries, factionalism, and bribery were used by the British colonial officials in Fiji to split the Indians along sex and class lines and render the opposition useless.

In this chapter I also examine the similarities between the women workers' movement in Fiji and the black women's movement in the United States after slavery. I argue that as coloured workers fighting for basic living standards the aims of the Indian women of 1920 were similar to the worker sentiments expressed by their black sisters in America. Both groups of women were protesting against the super-exploitation of their labour- as blacks, as workers and as women.

Comparison is also made between the militant women's movement of 1920 and the reformist Indian feminist movement of the late 1920s and 30s in Fiji. The middle-class white women's movement that emerged in the latter part of the decade, influenced and encouraged the development of a parallel Indian women's association. These associations concentrated their activities on education and welfare and can be seen as a movement for reform rather than revolution. In this chapter both these movements are compared and contrasted with the militancy of the 1920 women.

In general terms I argue that women in Fiji were scarcely passive victims and that their resistance was always expressed in diverse and

innovative ways. This has historically been a necessary strategy because a whole array of methods have been used to exploit and dominate Indian women- state force through violence and militarization; lack of opportunity in paid work; lack of education; lack of a political platform through franchise; and enforced domestication and compulsory heterosexuality. In this chapter all these issues are examined with reference to specific practices in Fiji.

1. The Social Origins of the 1920 Strike

When the first indentured workers had become 'free' after their period of indenture, they had two choices. They could either settle around the mills and plantations, still offering their labour power for sale for a pittance (but more than the indentured wage), or they could settle on leased cane farms (under certain limited conditions of lease), parcelled out by the CSR and other sugar companies. There was a third group of 'free' Indians- those who refused to have any connection with the plantations but who were not anxious to return to India. These Indians settled in and around Suva, where, as early as the 1880s, provision was being made for their settlement. The early settlers were of both sexes. Both men and women usually took odd jobs around the town and some held quite lucrative positions, such as merchants and clerks. The women did domestic labour for other Indians and sometimes for Europeans. Their pay was poor, and they were compelled to suffer indignities such as being forced to dress in uniforms more suitable for European parlourmaids than Indian women (personal communication Mrs Isabelle Madhavan 1977).

Over the years these 'town' Indians began to comprise a sizeable number, and many made money and rose in the ranks, often acting on behalf of Indians in trouble with the law. Gradually there developed certain economically-motivated and politically-based differences between the Indians in town. The majority remained as labourers, working a hand to mouth existence in irregular employment, while a few rose in stature and finance. Some were literate and became interpreters in court, others ran shops and businesses. Some were merchants, but sent their sons to school, and thus opened an avenue for them in the 'civil service'. Having been schooled in the Oxford

and Cambridge tradition many of these young men succumbed somewhat to the Empire ideology, and sometimes acted as spies for government. There is no evidence to suggest that these men were ever trusted to a great extent by other Indians, so whatever information they could provide to the colonial authorities usually had been already imparted by the CSR. There was a particularly close relationship between several of the Governors and Knox (these gentlemen being of the same social standing), and between various plantation general managers and the colonial secretary. This is revealed in a number of 'personal and confidential' letters between Knox and Rodwell, and several others.

In the towns the Indians had different motivations and aspirations. The labourers tended to rely on waged employment and so their concerns were with wages and regularity of employment. The wealthier town Indians on the other hand wished for a different liberation. They did not have to rely on waged employment and so were unlikely to join with any workers' demands, and they had little interest in farming and none whatsoever in the price of cane or the conditions under which it was grown and milled. These were the concerns of rural Indians only, particularly those who were dependent on the CSR and other sugar companies for their living.

Indians in the town had to pay rates, and were entitled to vote in the municipal elections until 1915 when the introduction of a literacy test diminished the number of voters, leading to great resentment. If Indians could not read or write they could not vote. Thus the Indians in town who had 'made it' agitated for local municipal as well as national franchise. This call was not shared by Indian women of the towns however. In a context where even European women did not have the vote, the call for franchise on the part of the few women 'proprietors and capitalists' would have been laughed out of court. Yet on grounds of property alone they would have been perfectly eligible.

The failure of Indians to get a vote in Fiji had to do with the view of them as a permanent servile class. Richard Piper of the Methodist Mission for example thought that Indians should not be enfranchised until they had been educated (CSO MP 718/21). Others in the Colony held the same opinion. Indians were 'coolies', and permitting them voting rights would enable them to 'get above their station'.

By 1911, of the 16,000 Indian men in total in Fiji, 59 were defined as 'Proprietors of land and Capitalists'. Of the 9,976 women, 21 were thus defined (McNeill and Chimman Lal, 1915 p 259-260) . In other words both men and women were, as a consequence of their own earnings, becoming owners of businesses or land. At present I am not concerned with those defined as 'proprietors of land', but with those defined as 'capitalists'. From the statistics it is evident that both men and women were 'capitalists', although the proportion of women in this category was much lower than that of men.

What did the working women, ie. those who may not have been defined as 'capitalist', actually do? They were involved in many different occupations: Hawkers, Storekeepers, Tailors, Cooks, Domestic Servants, Nurses and Laundry'men'. Some were also teachers. Another vast category of women who did not hold 'capitalist' or middle class jobs were women who defined themselves as 'other industrial workers' (ibid). This meant that they were most likely either casual or full time waged workers in various sorts of occupations around town.

But the majority defined themselves as being 'engaged in domestic duties' (ibid). These were women who had previously been engaged in waged work, probably on plantations. As waged workers they would have had somewhat of an independent existence. After indenture they would have either married or become employed in an unofficial and illegal occupation, such as prostitution. Since the 1911 Census did not define 'prostitution' as an employment category it is difficult to tell how many would have been in this type of work. There is evidence to suggest that in Toorak many Indian women ran a roaring trade, servicing visiting seamen, plantation men out for a night on the town, and even government officials. But whatever the occupations of women in the town, most would have had to eke out a meagre existence in a context where permanent employment was scarce, and the racism and sexism against coloured women a real impediment to progress and success.

The contradictions in the lives of the town women would not have been shared by the 'free' women in the the country settlements. By 1911

8,517 men and 1,760 women, out of the total of 16,000 males and 9,976 females, had defined themselves as 'Planters and Husbandmen' (ibid). These had settled around the plantation, growing cane for the mills and doing waged work for the company during harvest and milling, the peak times in the year. In other words they served as the reserve army of labour, being pulled into the waged workforce when it suited CSR and thrown back onto the land at other times. These Indians also eked out a meagre living during the best of times under varied and numerous CSR lease agreements, but their situation was better than the unemployed in the towns. On the farms the basic subsistence needs could be cultivated. Without their wives' and childrens' labour on the farm, the male farmers would have disappeared long ago as a non-waged labour force. Thus they grew cane under particularly arduous conditions for the CSR, and went to work in the mills in season.

But this was not the situation of all Indians in the country. Some, possibly because they had become sirdars, or had accumulated money through bartering of wives or daughters, or by getting mill rather than fieldwork, or by working as better paid domestic servants in the house of the 'sahib', had become 'proprietors of land'. This meant that they not only owned land, but leased parts of it to Indian tenants. As such they were classed as part of the 'capitalist' class by those who put together the Census. Thus when a top government official asked for a list of 'successful' Indians in various districts, this was quickly compiled in detail and the information furnished to the Colonial Secretary's Office. CSR were keeping their own records. The officials knew how many Indians had become successful and how many were in debt. When the time came to attack a proposed canefarmers' strike in 1921, this information was used effectively to quell the strike. The wives of the wealthier Indian farmers acted exactly like landed mistresses elsewhere. They had servants, their daughters were in purdah, and they were 'housewives'. Gradually women's country clubs were formed to deal with the boredom of these women.

Although all Indians in Fiji had, by 1920, become diverse in their personal aspirations and politics, they all still remembered the past indignities that had been inflicted upon them by the CSR. They had

coped with five years or more of servitude under the most appalling conditions. Even as they had become successful they had been unable to escape the clutches of CSR who enjoyed government support. Their very existence was dependent upon goodwill of the Company and the Government. There was little they could effectively do while CSR and Government still had indentured workers because they knew that only the withdrawal of labour would hurt. Under contract, the indentured labourers could not withdraw their labour. It was only when there was a shortage of labour for the main industry that the Indians could get what they wanted. This was obvious to all Indians, those who were free and those who were still indentured.

Indenture ended on January 1 1920. The Indians lost no time. On the 15th, two weeks later, Indian labourers at the Public Works Department in Suva went on strike. Four days later they were joined by Suva Municipal Council employees, as well as by some Government employees, and by January 21 the strike had spread to the Rewa district where the CSR employees stopped work (Ali 1980 p 43). The Navua workers in the employ of the Vancouver Fiji Sugar Co also joined the strike. Altogether close to ten thousand Indians went on a spree of rioting and destruction. The strike spread like wildfire, having a fully intended and planned domino effect. The CSR as a capitalist firm, and the Government, its agent, were being attacked on all fronts by a militant and thoroughly angry coloured labour force.

But the individual battles of the Indians, although united behind the banner of race, were separated out in terms of occupational demands. The waged workers sought a wage increase and a Commission to enquire into the cost of living. The civil and municipal servants and the wealthier class of Indians sought salary increases and franchise, and the cane workers, most of whom had just two weeks before been indentured labourers, sought better conditions and wages, the decades-old call of the indentured. But uniting this varied class movement was the idea of racial identification. Indians were attacking the CSR and Government officials from their social position as coloured people in an environment where a minority white group had always dominated political and economic affairs. In all the documents relating to the strike action, and the subsequent agitation for franchise, Indians

consistently pointed out that they were being treated as second class citizens because of their colour. It was the colour bar that prevented Europeans from giving the vote to propertied Indians.

But quite apart from the strike being motivated by questions of race and the cost of living, it was also affected by gender. Under the constraints of 'freedom' from plantation work, the women were confronted by their inability to articulate their problems within a limited work sphere. In the industrial unrest of the town in early 1920 women were able to find a platform from which they could address the problems affecting them directly as workers and as women- wages, and the cost of living. The wages were low for everyone, men and women, but the cost of living affected those unwaged women whose men worked, but who found it impossible to make ends meet. Thus the town women were the vanguard of the movement. The strike that occurred on January 15 had been instigated and planned by them. It was also run by them, with the men submissively following after. The women, under the feminist leadership of Jaikumari Devi Manilal, Phulkuar, and many others wrote petitions, ran meetings, went to see the governor, and physically stopped the men from even thinking about returning to work just as state violence was called upon to quell the riots. They organised demonstrations of men and women, and marched the long distance from Samabula Bridge to the gaol, where they thought one of their leaders was being held.

A more detailed resume of the the women's activities in keeping the strike going is provided in the official records, an aspect that has been downplayed in previous accounts of indentured history and of labour resistance (see for example Ali *ibid*; Gillion *op cit*; Lal 1983 and 1985a and b and 1986; Naidu 1980 and Sutherland *op cit*).

2. The Women's Strike: Official and Unofficial Views.

In the correspondance between Governor C.H. Rodwell and the Secretary of State for the Colonies it becomes clear that the strike was painstakingly orchestrated and planned. (1) Its instigators had carefully manipulated all sections of the Indian population, so that without warning a frontal attack on a confused government was launched on January 15.

For the Indian middle classes, preparation for some sort of protest had already been underway as early as 1918 when D.M. Manilal applied to lease a piece of native land near the volatile Rewa area. This was refused by Government but Manilal made his own private arrangements with the native landlords and erected an office anyway. When attempts were made to evict him, he resisted, going to court for the offence and being fined ten pounds which he paid in full. Meanwhile Manilal had already founded an association called the Indian Imperial Association, which had members from diverse backgrounds, but comprised mostly of intellectuals who were beginning to connect, through correspondence with India, the struggle between Indians and Europeans in Fiji and Indians and Europeans in India. Many Fiji Indians were barred from this association however, and some complained, calling it a 'secret organisation' in a letter to the Governor on Oct 3 1919. When Manilal was having trouble over his lease, the Association called a meeting objecting in very strong terms to the prosecution and conviction of 'Mr D.M. Manilal, M.A. LLB, Barrister at law'. They argued that his conviction was particularly reprehensible in view of the fact that Europeans in the Colony had in the past been able to acquire large tracts of land from the natives in return for 'match-boxes, match locks and illicit liquor'. They also argued that the Government obviously did not want Indians to settle in areas where they were not completely dependent on the 'European clique'.

The middle class Indian men were thus already beginning to challenge the racial nature of British administration. They argued for equal rights under the law for those with property and thus confronted the Europeans armed with the whites' own western democratic and liberal rules which were coming under threat because liberal democracy was at variance (i.e. in contradiction) with 'racism'. But these middle class and propertied Indian men would also have been aware of the extent of the opposition. Several letters had been written to the Governor by Indians dissatisfied with Manilal's leadership. Manilal and his band of intellectuals would have been opposed to the methods employed by the wealthier merchant classes to carve out a niche for themselves with the Europeans. Manilal would also have been aware of the ambivalence of the civil servants. Only in the final instance, when

everyone else had gone on strike the civil servants would join. Until then they were a potential danger, as subsequent events proved.

By January 21 1920 three different groups of workers were on strike. The waged workers of the PWD and the municipal workers left work within a week of each other, and the cane workers soon after. Caneworkers were a bit slow to go on strike because they had only recently become 'free' and were probably still affected by the lethargy that had gripped most men during indenture, excepting of course in their treatment of women. They needed encouragement, which the town Indians provided but this was called 'intimidation' by the authorities, and the culprits arrested. This show of force from the colonial officials, possibly on the advice of the CSR, was confronted by more than 1000 Indians who had gathered, and who attempted to make a rush for the police station where witnesses were held. The opposition was so strong that the government had to call in twelve Fijian constables, followed by twenty Europeans and a machine gun section of the Defence Force. This served to quell the riot and there were no further incidences of resistance that day.

On the 29th of January, riots began again, this time at Suva, the origin of the first strike action. Several bands of Indians of Toorak, ~~the~~ the impoverished inner city suburb, attempted to attack a European hotelier who was reputed to have flogged his Indian servant. The local constabulary was only able to quell this riot with a baton charge.

It was at this point that the women made their presence visible. The riot in Toorak had appeared to be conducted by women, and their actions had proved to be both violent and fearless. In the altercation several European men had been beaten by women, while others, both Fijian and European, were run out of town. More than 20 women were arrested and charged with riotous behaviour, and of these, fourteen were convicted and sent to gaol or fined. Women also attempted to force Indian men to stop work. Many were so intimidated by the women that they had no choice but to listen to them. The women planning the riots were described by the Governor as those of the 'lowest class'. In his report he stated that they had used 'filthy practices' and obscene language to discourage the men from working. There is no doubt

that the women swore at the men who were thinking of returning to work, and there is also no doubt that the forms of punishment used on plantations (such as urinating on men being held on the ground by several other women) were also put into use. As the Fiji Times protested in horror:

'Something must be done to put a stop to the Indian women suborners. Theirs is not a case of mere intimidation. They use cruel, filthy and hideous methods. They are not women, they are ghouls, who ought to be gaoled at once. They are too awful to be at large. Last night they hunted in packs, chasing 'boys' into their very homes. If any of them get seriously injured, no one could seriously be blamed. This thirteenth century sort of business must be stopped'.

In response to this a reader wrote:

' Now as it is illegal to strike a woman why not get two or three men (good stock-men) to go around on horseback with a dog whip, which would be far more effective than a dozen special constables, with their paltry little batons, and be perfectly legal' (Fiji Times Feb 20, quoted in Ali 1980 p 49).

The poorly waged and under-employed women of Toorak were on the move but violence by men was being recommended as a method to subdue them.

Meanwhile the Governor was asked to receive a deputation of a group of Indians so that they could express their grievances. When he agreed the Governor found himself confronting a band of 15 leading Indian men and women, headed by a woman, Jaikumari Devi Manilal. Devi's petition was simple and clear- the government had to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to look into the cost of foodstuffs and the inadequacy of the prevailing rates of wages of workers. This petition was a clear workers' demand for more money for work done, and an investigation into food prices which had become exorbitant at the end of the war as a consequence of scarcity and blackmarketeering.

The Governor agreed almost immediately to the appointment of a Commission but would not agree to an increase in wages until the

workers had gone back to work. Furthermore, he argued that if the findings of the Commission was that workers should get more wages, this would be put into force from the date of workers' resumption of work rather than the period they were on strike. By this method the Governor hoped to get them back to work quickly.

The deputation were pleased with the Governor's recommendation that the Commission would enquire into the present cost of living, the present rates of salaries and wages as compared with former years, whether the salaries and wages could keep up with the cost of food, and what measures should be put into place if there was a discrepancy. This was what they had gone on strike for. They were less clear about going back to work unless their demands were met. They also argued for an Indian representative on the Commission, and upon the Governor's acquiescence, promptly nominated S.S. Chowla, a law clerk as their representative. It is curious that they did not appoint Manilal but there could be several reasons for this- Manilal may have wanted to keep right out of the scene in order to minimise polarisation within the Indian community; or Chowla's name was put forward as a compromise by Indian men among whom personal rivalries and factionalism were already beginning to develop, or alternatively, Manilal thought that he might be more effective as a representative for Indians questioned by the Commission. It may also be the case that Manilal recognised his position as someone who had not been a 'girmitya', and therefore felt politically unqualified to play a prominent part in actual policy making.

Jaikumari would also have been an obvious choice since she appeared to be the leader of the strike, but she probably knew that being a woman would limit rather than advance the movement. The men would never seriously accept her as a representative on the Commission. As it happened, in the long run, Chowla was not much of a choice. In the hearings and reports that followed, he could only just hold his own, and would have been completely intimidated by such important personages as the Chief Justice who was also a member of the Commission. Eventually Chowla produced a minority report which called for a wage increase to 4/- per day.

But Chowla's main concern, while the strike was on, was to get the people back to work. In this he shared government officials' views that the grievances would be sorted out after the Indians returned to work. Like the Europeans he completely misunderstood the meaning of the strike. It was seen as a strategy for bringing certain problems to the attention of the authorities. It was never understood or acknowledged that when the Indians went on strike it was as much an active withdrawal of labour to prevent further profiteering from their surplus labour, as an attention-grabbing device. On February 16 Chowla urged the Indians to go back to work as did the other government-appointed leader, Badri Maharaj. The personal rivalry between the two men did not prevent them from favouring the government over the Indian workers. From then on Badri represented the rich farming class of Indians who achieved representation through wealth, and Chowla the educated civil servant who bought it through literacy.

But between January 15 and February 16, the workers strikes raged. On February 2, 5-6000 people gathered again in Suva, the women at the forefront of the strike urging even the middle-class workers to stay away from work. On February 5 the Commission had its first sitting and the calls of the Governor for Indians to return to work went unheeded. Instead, a group of Indians demanded that he come out to Nausori to talk to them. The Governor reported indignantly to the Secretary of State:

'The proposal that the Governor should make a journey of 14 miles, in order to parley in a clandestine fashion with strikers, was one which I need hardly say I should not have been prepared to entertain for a moment, and I regret that the leaders did not put forward their request in writing and so afford me an opportunity of telling them what I thought of the suggestion'.

But the draft of the address planned for him was later obtained and the Governor reported that, according to this document, the Indians did not want more wages at all. They wanted to complain about the limits placed on their political aspirations. Thus, wrote the Governor, the cost of living protests were nothing but a cover for politics.

The Governor had little idea that each group of Indians were asking for different things, and all were approaching the question of liberation from different class perspectives. There is no doubt that Manilal was backing the merchants and farmers for franchise, whereas Jaikumari Devi was involved with the workers. All were making an onslaught, which was expressed in racial terms, on the hegemony of the colonial state and the privately owned sugar companies.

On 11 February the Toorak workers again rioted, this time a woman, Rahiman, was for the first time mentioned by name as having been directly involved in the rioting. A European special constable had tried to arrest Rahiman but he was sat upon and beaten by a gang of men and women carrying sticks and stones. The police were forced to 'retire and were pursued down Toorak road by a howling mob of some 300 Indians who hurled sticks and stones after them'. Eventually the rioters were driven into a gully where the special constable had seen women assembling earlier in the day. The Inspector General of the Constabulary and the military arrived at about the same time, and the Indians rounded up. Altogether 175 men and 14 women were taken to the police station. It was at this stage that the Governor expressed relief that he had already asked help from Australia and New Zealand.

On 12 February the New Zealanders on the naval vessel the 'Tutanekai' arrived first, with 60 officers and men of the New Zealand Defence Force with Lewis gun sections. New Zealand Prime Minister William Ferguson Massey was willing to send his armed navy to what he described as 'no ordinary strike' (Dominion 4 March 1920 cited in McGibbon, unpublished paper 1985). Although Massey would have been in sympathy with the colonial government there is no doubt that his actions were aimed principally at guarding New Zealand's sugar supplies; Fiji was New Zealand's biggest supplier of sugar. Moreover, the CSR investment in New Zealand under a type of business practice called 'transfer pricing' had made enough money for the New Zealand government.

But the 'Tutanekai' had not been able to leave New Zealand without problems. Harry Holland of the Opposition had protested against the

use of New Zealand troops in a workers' strike (ibid). As Holland pointed out, military intervention would be bad enough against strikers in a New Zealand territory; it was 'infinitely worse when an armed force is sent from New Zealand, whether to intimidate or coerce, working men and women of another race, enslaved and struggling against their enslavement in an island 1500 miles away from us and over which New Zealand has no jurisdiction' (ibid p 9). When the 'Tutanekai' arrived in Auckland the watersiders refused to load 70 tons of coal, and arrangements had to be made for a secret call at Whangerei. Then, just as the vessel was about to be cast off, the stokers suddenly demanded their discharges, claiming that they had not been aware of the strikebreaking nature of their mission. They walked off their jobs, were arrested and locked up, and when soldiers volunteered to take their jobs, the seamen refused to work with them. Finally the Seamen's Union's permission was obtained but meanwhile the stokers agreed to come back to work after being told that the vessel was going to Fiji to protect the lives of Europeans there(ibid). The white New Zealand workers were not willing to break the strike but were certainly willing to protect Europeans from racial violence. Even among the militant New Zealand workers questions of race and class were not connected.

The vessel finally arrived in Fiji on 12 February and its berthing at both Suva and Levuka was used to intimidate the Indians who had only recently escaped from the violent environment of the plantation. On the same day, another riot was brewing at Nausori and strikers were reported to be coming towards Suva. The cane workers were probably coming to join the Suva workers. But the Nausori workers were trapped by the Rewa River on the one side, and a contingent of six Specials on the other who attempted to keep the Indians at bay. This incident too passed without serious consequences although all the reinforcements would have been armed. The Indians had nothing but sticks and stones. The Fijian constables were used by the Europeans as shock troops and sent into the fray first. The sticks and stones thrown by the Indians landed mostly on Fijians, and the governor later praised them for their 'exemplary' behaviour in the face of such adversity.

The next day, another riot took place, this time at the Samabula Bridge where the troops actually fired into the crowd and shot an Indian who later died in hospital. No details were furnished in the official documents about his or her name or origin. A magisterial enquiry held hurriedly soon after found that the case was one of 'justifiable homicide'.

The most noticeable aspect of the strike and riots, reported the Governor, was the extent of intimidation of 'loyal' Indians by the Indian 'hooligans' and the women. The loyal Indians held a meeting, thanking the Governor for having appointed a Commission and asking for protection against interference from the rioters. No doubt Badri Maharaj was one of these for he described the strikers to the Governor as 'larrikins'. The loyal Indians further took steps to urge the Governor to punish the agitators. Having already identified the leaders as the Manilals, Fazal Khan and Harapal Maharaj the Governor took action. On 29 March 1920, under the Peace and Good Order Ordinance of 1875, Manilal, Jaikumari Devi, and the two others, Maharaj and Khan, were barred from living on the three main islands, Viti Levu, Vanua Levu and Ovalau. They lived uncomfortably for a while at Nukulau, where there were no provisions for their care, and soon after were forced to leave the Colony. They visited New Zealand and India, and eventually, Manilal settled in Aden, from where in 1950 he applied to return to Fiji. He was rejected on the grounds that he had been an undesirable resident of Fiji thirty years previously (C 51/8/5).

There are several unofficial accounts of the 1920 strike. Oral accounts from the 'girit' survivors indicate very clearly that women were indeed at the forefront of the strike. In one account that I recorded, Barodi Buksh of Nausori recalled the actions of other women who were involved in the strike (Personal communication, Nausori 1985). His mother and other women of Nausori heard a rumour to the effect that Jaikumari Devi had been imprisoned. They abandoned their fieldwork and marched towards Suva, a distance of some 12 miles. As they reached a police barrier they had to stop but they withdrew a few yards, and raising their arms above their heads brought their wrists together, shattering their glass bangles as a mark of anger and

strength. The breaking of glass bangles signifies a breaking of ties and simultaneously, an expression of anger. An Indian woman who breaks her glass bangles in public is usually left alone by men for it indicates that she is sufficiently angered to break her emotional and spiritual ties with the men. In extreme cases it signifies divorce. To the people who wrote the official reports, this action would have been meaningless and so was not included in the records.

Many such personal accounts of the 1920 strike have survived the passage of time. In another account, Jaikumari's second in command, Phulkuar was reported to have gone to all the strike meetings, some of which were held by government officials in the Toorak League Hall. She also went on a house to house campaign for the strikers until eventually the officials, in exasperation, took her away. My informant, Bhanmatti Prasad heard reports that Phulkuar was a such a big and strong woman that it took two policemen to drag her away (Mrs B. Prasad, personal communication 1986).

There was another report of the 1920 strike which was written in 1922-23 by members of a delegation who visited Fiji to find out whether the Colony was suitable for Indian 'colonisation'. Known as the 'Raju Report' the document examined the wages and living standards of workers in Fiji concluding that conditions were so bad that Indian officials should immediately arrange for repatriation of Fiji Indian workers to India. The members had gathered information about the 1920 strike and the report acknowledged that Indian women had abused and hailed passers-by in an effort to gather more support for the strike. The report also attempted to justify Indians' violent actions against authority during the strike, arguing that their stance was as a consequence of the heavy handedness of the colonial police force and the army (Raju Report cited in Ali 1980 Chapter 2).

The Raju Report was suppressed by colonial government authorities in London at the request of Knox who had been summonsed to an audience with the Secretary of State. The 1922 visit of Knox and Dixon to London was significant because the records show just how indispensable the CSR activities were to the British Government. However, the problems arose when the Indian Government were consulted as to the

advisability of sending more Indian workers to Fiji which they outrightly refused unless better wages and housing were to be given. Knox continued to hold out for the low wages that were paid before the war and refused to negotiate unless the emigration to Fiji was seen in the same light as Indian emigration to Ceylon and Malaya which the Indian government officials favoured.

Eventually Knox got much of what he had wanted, expressing satisfaction in his notes with his London visit. The Raju Report was suppressed and the wages of workers were to remain at 1/6, 'the same proportion that the cost of the statutory ration when the wage is fixed bears to the cost of a similar article then, viz 2/9' ; and 'If an employer supplies such food of a quality satisfactory to the Fiji Government at fixed prices, those prices shall be taken as the basis of comparison in determining a reduced minimum wage payable by that employer; provided that the reduction of the standard minimum wage thus made shall not be more than 25 per cent' (Knox and Dixon: Notes from London Sept 1922). Even as late as 1922 therefore Knox had no intention of making conditions better for his workers whom he saw as lazy people, preferring to 'waste' their labour on their own small holdings. By this time also CSR officials had realised that no further indentured workers were to arrive from India and that the Indian government officials preferred settlement of Indians anyway. Since CSR officials had already started their smallfarmer schemes at this stage, plans were made to extend this method of labour exploitation.

Despite the few official references to women in the 1920 strike, it must be stated that the popular view that women took part in strike action only in support of the men is incorrect and not borne out by the evidence. The meetings and deputations that were organised during the first part of 1920 were organised by Jaikumari, Phulkuar, Rahiman and others. They were the leaders of the men and yet this has never been acknowledged by the authorities or by Indian men in Fiji. The first strike ever recorded in Fiji was organised by women in Mago in the 1880s, and the tradition was maintained by the women of 1920. But women were active in the strike not only as workers. The strike action by women was a feminist action, designed to challenge not only wage levels, but also male domination in towns. This action could only be

taken by women workers. Women had already congregated in large numbers in the Toorak area, the poor inner city slum. These women reacted to their impoverishment as women workers. They articulated their feminism in terms of both waged and unwaged work. But since they were beginning to have limited political platforms after indenture, this battle had to be waged through men.

3. Feminism in Fiji- the First 'Wave'.

As early as 1917, C.F. Andrews had already noticed a marked difference between the women of India and those of Fiji. It had been brought to his attention by an Oxford educated colonial officer that in Fiji there was a 'militant Women's Movement going before our eyes here.. among the Indian women' (Andrews 1920). The reasons for this emergence of a women's movement were said to be the system itself with its disproportion in the sexes (ibid). The officer described the situation of Indian women as one where they had developed something 'akin to polyandry and a matriarchal system....In such a state of society, the woman had naturally obtained the advantage over the man and the men were very soon made aware of it'.

But while the colonial official expressed a grudging admiration for Indian women, this was not shared by Andrews. The so-called 'independence' of Indian women in the coolie lines had really 'pained' Andrews, for as he pointed out: '... the Indian woman's life in Fiji seemed to have lost very much indeed of all that I had learnt to reverence so deeply in India itself. Half of the beauty of Indian womanhood seemed to have departed' (ibid p 381). Nevertheless, argued Andrews staunchly if incorrectly, '...when I looked deeper I discovered a stern, courageous patriotism. This I had seen also among the Indian women in Natal. I had often heard from Mahatama Gandhi's own lips how brave the women had been during the passive resistance struggle, and how they had put to shame the men by their wonderful courage and endurance. There was something I felt, similar to this in Fiji, though it had its unpleasing features of roughness where gentleness might be expected' (ibid). Andrews was right about the origins of the movement and the angry militancy of the women. He was wrong about the 'patriotism' he thought he saw. Fiji women's concerns were not patriotism but food and wages. Patriotism was the prerogative

of the middle class social reformers whose servants did all the real work in the house. Furthermore, in Fiji, patriotism was a male concern. Women were too busy trying to survive under appalling work conditions which made them the target of male abuse also. Andrews had completely missed the point of the Fiji Indian feminist movement.

This is revealed in a clearer fashion in the solution that Andrews proposed for the 'liberation' of women. He expressed his faith in Indian men to bring women back to their senses: 'I noticed another feature far more pleasing than that which I have mentioned. It was this- the ideal of chivalry and reverence for true womanhood was not dead in the hearts of the Indian men in Fiji. It was too deeply planted in Indian nature to perish and so it had survived even this most terrible ordeal of the indenture system. In certain ways it could be true to say, that the ideal had come closer to the hearts of Indian men than ever, during their stay in Fiji' (ibid, author's emphasis). Andrews could well have been referring to the frequent murders of women which had been committed in the name of male honour and 'the chivalry and reverence for true Indian womanhood'. Andrews idea of a women's movement was one that was non-militant, gentle, and run by women who could just as easily take tea with the Viceroy or Governor, as look after a home. The rampant sexuality and militancy of the working women of Fiji would have been at variance with his gentle middle class, mission-defined sensibilities.

However, Andrews did approve of Jaikumari Devi. He thought she was 'graceful' and gentle and epitomised all the wonders of womanhood in the way she carried her infant son in her arms as she talked to 'poorer' Indian men and women; 'There was a wonderful grace and gentleness and kindness in every action. She would talk with these poor people with affection, like a true mother, and would listen to all their troubles and sorrows. It distressed Andrews that other Indian women of Fiji could not be like her, instead of fierce and independent, 'like Amazons' whose 'hard life had made them hard in character like steel'. It could well be the case that Andrews had over idealised Jaikumari, for her actions in leading the deputation to the Governor and her presence at the forefront of the strike were well

planned and executed, hardly the actions of a gentle social reformer who met poor people in her courtyard.

However, despite his idealised view of Indian womanhood, Andrews was convinced that the heroine of the strike was Jaikumari Devi. He thought she would have learnt enough lessons at Natal and would have known of the courage of Indian women. Andrews believed that Jaikumari herself had been the inspirer of the strike. He also believed that the strike would have met with success if the military had not been called in. CSR was well able to pay more wages to the workers as the profits of the company showed (ibid), and government would have increased the salaries and wages to its employees in the interest of peace. Andrews also condemned the authorities for subduing a strike of Indian women by calling in the military. He offered the view that Indians would not have been agitated as much had they not heard a rumour that Jaikumari Devi was in prison. The stance of Jaikumari Devi was a work of Indian heroism because 'one brave little Indian woman' had dared to struggle against the powerful company when so many rich Indians had failed (ibid p 380-387).

Andrews article, although full of sorrow at the lack of true 'womanhood' in Fiji, nevertheless revealed the extent of Jaikumari's involvement which was later ignored in the government documents. With her group of women she had

'shamed the men again and again into holding out for higher wages and not betraying the cause. They organised themselves into "Strike Committees" and would not let their men surrender. Jaikumari Devi herself went at the head of them, urging men everywhere not to work till their wrongs were righted. At times it is true they may have used physical force and in that way brought harm to a good cause but, what was far more truly effective, they used the moral force of openly and publicly disgracing the men, in their own eyes, if they dared to play the coward where women were so brave' (ibid p 386).

Jaikumari Devi was eventually deported for her part in the strike action. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to speculate upon what could have happened to her, and whether she was ever militant again,

but it would be interesting to trace her departure from Fiji to India via New Zealand, and to find out about her activities in Aden.

However Andrews call that the 'activities and bravery' of Jaikumari Devi must never be forgotten (ibid p 387) went unheeded by contemporary scholars, and the strike was held to be the prime responsibility of Indian men. But it must be stated that although she was a great leader, it is doubtful whether Jaikumari Devi would have been able to act without her band of militant females. She had never been an indentured servant. No matter how much she empathised with the condition of labourers, her origins and social circumstances were middle class although she responded to the plight of the workers in working class terms. It was probably the working class militancy of the working women like Rahiman and Phulkuar which served to prop up the strike but they could not have done without Jaikumari Devi's energy and devotion to the cause. There is no doubt that Jaikumari Devi learnt the meaning of women's militant actions along the way, despite Andrews claim that her knowledge of this was picked up from her observations of the actions of important Indian men in Natal.

While the militant working class women were put in gaol, Jaikumari Devi, along with her husband D.M. Manilal who had been surprisingly quiet during the Suva strikes were deported. The Government officials were beginning to build a strong case against her and used the evidence of Indian women like Etwari to nail her. Etwari told of a meeting she had attended where 'Mrs Manilal' had been in the chair and she had urged the women to follow her and listen to what she had to say. Etwari also said that Mrs Manilal had led other women around the town with the object of preventing men working' (C 76/20). She 'at all times instructed us that we were to do our best to stop men from working and if necessary to use force. Mrs Manilal informed us that she had done this sort of thing in Mauritius or Trinidad and it succeeded in stopping the men from going to work' (ibid). According to the records, Phulkuar eventually also turned against Jaikumari Devi, although it is unclear whether, as a proud chronicler of events, she was detailing the extent of Jaikumari's involvement, or whether she was actually 'telling tales'. Eventually however, Phulkuar's evidence, and also that of other women such as Chandkuar and Rachell were used

as evidence against Jaikumari Devi before she was deported. Similar evidence of Indian male witnesses were used against her husband (ibid).

From Nukulau Manilal complained in writing about the conditions under which he and his family had to live. He argued for the type of accommodation given to European passengers under quarantine at Nukulau, complained about food, which he said was not vegetarian, and appealed for medical treatment for his sick five month old baby. He also accused the nurses at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital of neglecting his first child, Ghana Miladas who had died there (C39/1920).

In addition Manilal attempted to gather support from Indians he and Jaikumari Devi had supported and aided in their strike action. He attempted to send a letter clandestinely to Chowla which was intercepted by the authorities. In it Manilal asked Chowla to tell all Indians in Fiji about the condition of his family at Nukulau. When Chowla was questioned as to his loyalty to the British Government by the Colonial Secretary, he immediately sided with the government, saying that he would not have acted on Manilal's instructions had he actually received the intercepted letter (ibid). Chowla was warned that if he wished to serve the government than he had to be loyal. Chowla would have paid heed and weighed up his future in Fiji against a dubious loyalty to Manilal and Jaikumari Devi before refusing to act on behalf of Manilal's property in Fiji at Manilal's request (ibid). Manilal's friends, Khan and Maharaj were repatriated, but Manilal and Jaikumari Devi deported. In response to his Order of Prohibition Manilal wrote to the Governor pointing out that a campaign carried out by Europeans and some Indians had ended his work in Fiji. Manilal also referred to his wife and said that the statements made against her by one 'Phulkuar' should not be taken seriously because Phulkuar was of 'bad character' (with which statement the colonial secretary privately agreed pointing out that Phulkuar had constantly been in trouble with the law, and once had been taken to court by a man who had paid her a sum of money as bride price but having taken the money she had refused to honour the contract). Nevertheless, as Manilal pointed out, Phulkuar had probably been 'worked up' to say

what she did. She had since changed her mind about her previous statement about Jaikumari Devi's involvement in the strike. In his long letter Manilal attempted to explain to the Governor what his motives in Fiji had been. He said he had attempted to get Indians to ask for what was their 'due', and to be usefully employed planting paddy for themselves in the country, rather than wander around the town. In conclusion, Manilal said he was pleased to leave the Colony because he was beginning to find it 'unendurable'.

Soon after, a petition signed by 55 Indians was handed to the Governor in which the signatories expressed regret at Manilal's deportation order, asking that he be allowed to extend his time in the Colony until passage was secured for them. Others however urged the Governor to deal harshly with Manilal and Jaikumari Devi, arguing that they had caused trouble in Fiji (C 71/20). The Governor ordered that Badri Maharaj's influence should be used to put down any further resistance against the government and in support of Manilal (C 58/1920). He advised that Badri Maharaj should become more prominent. But Badri was not necessarily popular with Indians. When he tried to speak at a public meeting of Indians later that year he was barred, and subsequently he complained to the Governor that some Indians were blaming him for the deportation of Manilal and Jaikumari Devi (C86/20).

In late 1920 the Governor ordered a careful censorship of all material arriving from India, anxious to prevent the spread of 'seditious' literature. Much of this literature, which used symbols from ancient India to present revolutionary messages, came into the hands of government officials who kept them for the record. Meanwhile Badri went on with his spying. He reported on one Mitter, a school teacher of Nadi who was supposed to be 'secretly keeping alive the spirit of unrest in Indian minds' (C 128/20). The witch hunt for the leaders of the unrest ended when the Commandant of the Fiji Military Forces, using his undisclosed intelligence methods, told the Colonial Secretary that the leaders were the ones who had been deported (C 137/20). Once Manilal and others had left Fiji, CSR intelligence took over to find out their movements and to monitor their conversations with those outside the Colony. Writing to the Colonial Secretary, Hughes of the CSR said that Manilal, Jaikumari and others had been

highly unpopular with the Europeans on board their ship to India because they were constantly condemning the British Empire (C 142/ 1920). In response the Colonial Secretary thanked Hughes and asked to be kept informed about Manilal's future movements. But this was of temporary concern only because by October 1 the Government was becoming worried about unrest in Ba, an area dominated by sugarcane production but where the Suva riots had had only minimal effect. The cane workers and farmers were gearing themselves up for an onslaught against the CSR which finally eventuated in 1921.

With Manilal and Jaikumari Devi gone on 15 April 1920 the struggle in Fiji became riddled with factions. Far too many wealthy Indian men were keen to establish their own position in Fiji, and people such as Chowla wanted to rise in the ranks of the civil service. The women who took part in the strike served their gaol terms, paid their fines and sank into obscurity. One, a Mrs Singh, went to India to talk about the reasons for the strike and her speech was published in the Bombay Chronicle of November that year. As a consequence she was prohibited from ever returning to Fiji under an Order from the Colonial Secretary (ibid).

In Fiji, Phulkuar was 'rescued' by the Methodist Mission and became a roving ambassador for them, persuading young Indian girls to go to the church school, and later becoming a president of the first middle class Indian women's organisation, the 'Stri Sewa Sabha' which did charity work for poorer Indians around the town. The militancy of the Fiji Indian women's movement became confined to middle class reformism. In the absence of paid work for women, intelligent and articulate Indian women found it necessary to cope with their lack of 'meaningful' work through charitable organisations and involvement in the field of Christian education.

The Cost of Living Commission that was set up as a consequence of the 1920 strike heard many submissions from various individuals and groups about wages and prices and finally concluded its sitting in October the following year with three reports, a majority report signed by most of the Commissioners who, apart from the chief Justice, were government appointed Agent General of Immigration, the Acting Chief

Medical Officer, and Badri Maharaj. The two Minority reports were authored by Chowla, by Ellis, a barrister and solicitor who was hostile to the Indians, and by Brabant, the Acting Receiver General. Needless to say there were no women representatives on the Commission, although the detailed evidence gathered by the Commissioners showed that had it not been for Indian women's work in cultivation of gardens and in waged labour the men would not be able to work at the wages given to them (Fiji LegCo Paper No 46 1920 pp 12 and 13). This evidence was detailed by Chowla in his minority report. It may be the case that more attention was paid to women by Chowla who had been the representative chosen by Jaikumari's deputation to the Governor. This indispensibility of women's labour to male income was also echoed in the majority report (ibid p 28). Prior to his deportation, D.M. Manilal had appeared on behalf of Indians and presented well-versed male witnesses and lists of food prices to support the Indians' claims. .

The final report concluded that the food prices and cost of fabric and metal had risen dramatically with no corresponding increase in wages. The Commission urged government to subsidise the cost of rice and to allow a ration of 6d per day's work to government workers. Chowla argued for a wage of 4/- per day for free labour instead of the present 2/6, which even the Governor had earlier in 1919 admitted was inadequate (Ali 1980 p 55 and Commission recommendations op cit). In Suva the wages had remained at 2/- from 1909 to November 1919 when they became 2/6. In Rewa, 2/- was offered and at Navua it had been 1/6 as late as 1915. Women workers always received on average about 6 pence per day less than men. Furthermore it was revealed that Europeans charged more at their store than the Indian storekeepers for the same commodities (Ali p 57).

Brabant and Ellis were totally opposed to a wage increase (ibid). They thought the Indian labourers could make up the deficiency in wages by finding other work and that there should be an encouragement to locally produce foodstuffs. They saw a wage increase in Suva area as a threat to present wages elsewhere.

CSR was wary of the strike spreading but apart from the riots at Rewa and Navua, there were few plantations and farms affected. Its officials kept a watching brief however, and reported to the General Manager as often as possible. By October 1920 CSR was beginning to use its own spies to report on meetings held by Indians in the west, where much of the cane was now being grown for climatic reasons. Constant communication both of a personal and an official nature was taking place between the CSR officials and the colonial secretary as well as the Governor who could use the members of the police force to monitor the activities and unrest of the Indians in the west. In a confidential letter to Rodwell, William Dixon, the senior CSR official in Fiji wrote: 'As you know we have officials constantly moving about among the Indians and every effort is being made to keep in close touch with the situation...' CSR F2. 0. 3 1). Dixon reported that the Lautoka, Nadi and Sigatoka Indians were quietly proceeding with their work and seemed satisfied with CSR's new improved conditions which had occurred after the earlier cane strike of January.

CSR was, however, concerned about the Ba district where Indians were restless and a few militant male leaders had emerged. There was even talk of a union (CSR F 4.0. 13. 6). Dixon's letter revealed that the Indians in the West appeared to be fighting for more than just extra wages and better cane prices. They were beginning to target the Europeans as the enemy, thus introducing a racial element in the agitations. For this, Dixon blamed a man by the name of Riaz, who appeared to be a European himself (a New Zealander in fact) but was supporting the Indians, and Bere Singh, a court interpreter. Government intelligence targetted a Pundit Sheonath and a Santah Maharaj also as the leaders (C152/20). In October Maharaj was also alleged to have made the remark that white owners of the land were so desperate for labour that they were willing to offer their 'memsahibs' in exchange for Indian labour (C 155/20). But the government decided not to prosecute him for to do so 'would make him a martyr'. Typically, it was decided instead to encourage the factions which opposed him (ibid). Although Maharaj escaped Pundit Sheonath was repatriated to India (C 154/20). A clause in the immigration ordinance that had hitherto given Indians the right of passage back to India was now being used to get rid of agitators and political leaders.

The wealthier Indian planters were also being used against the poorer Indian labourers and leaseholders (C158/20). By mid- October it was becoming clear to the Government and to the CSR that the cane workers would soon give trouble. It was undecided at this point whether the strike was politically or economically motivated. The Government thought the Indians wanted increased political representation, and this was echoed by the CSR. At no time did they acknowledge that for male and female Indians in Fiji both politics and economics were inextricably intertwined.

CSR's refusal to increase wages or generally improve the standard of living for its Fiji workers was not influenced merely by racism and class sentiments. As an employer CSR was infamous for paying workers low wages and justifying it on grounds of gender as well as race. This was not confined to Fiji only. In Australia CSR refused to pay women workers the same rate as men (142/3582), and in New Zealand they refused to employ women in the mills (CSR : Sugar Workers, Sugar Town 1984 p 12).

In all further unrests in Fiji, women were surprisingly silent. From being an active and vital part of the resistance in 1920 they now no longer had a voice. The agitations that involved Indians in the canefields in the following year made no reference to women's participation or activities. It was as though women had suddenly been made silent. The reasons for this and the ways in which women were silenced will be examined in the next chapter on settlement.

What were the immediate and long term consequence of the 1920 strike? First of all it was brought to the notice of the colonial and CSR officials and Indian men that women were still to be reckoned with despite their lack of opportunity in paid and regular work after indenture had ended. Women were more militant than men, they had more courage and they had the ability to effectively challenge male dominated institutions like government, the company, and Indian organisations. Under far-sighted and charismatic leadership like the one provided by Jaikumari Devi, women had the ability to make life difficult for all classes of men in the Colony. The effectiveness of

the women's struggle was shown by the Governor temporarily accepting defeat and asking for military help from both the Australian and New Zealand governments. Thus the immediate action of the authorities was to weaken the women's movement and get rid of the leaders. Once Jaikumari Devi had left, and the other women imprisoned, the men were left without leaders. They quickly succumbed to pressure and returned to work at the instigation of wealthier, middle class Indian men like Chowla and Maharaj.

Meanwhile the government officials called upon their stock of wealthy and educated Indian men to quell the riots. Both CSR and Government had kept records of suitable men who could be used either as spies or as buffers in case of trouble. By 1919 CSR had already sent a list of 'successful' Indians on the Ba Coast to the manager in Sydney. All of these men owned property and could be encouraged to side with the CSR in case of trouble from the cane labourers or farmers holding lease (ABL 142/3164). The Government had already cultivated men such as Badri Maharaj of Penang who was also independently wealthy. These men were asked to subdue the Indian workers who, after the deportation of Manilal, Jaikumari and others, comprised a leaderless rabble. Furthermore, factionalism within the Indian community was shamelessly exploited and inter-caste and religious rivalry fostered. As early as 1917 CSR had already noted that there were major differences between Hindus and Muslims (ABL 142/2558). Thus the policy of divide and rule was actively used against the opposition during the strike. This could have been also used to cause a rift between men and women. Indian patriarchal sensibilities would have been called upon, as was done during indenture, to place women back in the home, invisible and silenced. This is described in the next chapter. Men were permitted to take positions of leadership, and franchise was the prerogative of males only.

But Indian male dissatisfaction could not be quelled without some concessions. The middle class, wealthy and literate men were granted franchise (CSO MP 718/21), and these men were later instrumental in pacifying workers in any strike action. The workers failed in their attempt to get a wage rise, for as the Governor explained to Whitehall, 'public opinion would not accept a wage increase of 4/6'

(Ali 1980 p 62). But he did recommend to CSR that there should be a guaranteed price for cane for five years and contended that Indian farmers would accept a lower price for their cane provided this guarantee was given. He also recommended that the working day for labourers be limited to eight hours. But these recommendations were never implemented and the 1920 workers' strike appeared to have been a failure. The real concessions granted were to the middle classes who not only got the vote but also began to have more access to education funds.

In despair many Indians sought repatriation. More than 11,000 Indians registered that year for repatriation (ibid p 65), although when the time came to sail, many changed their minds. The women disappeared from the centre stage. Apart from the numbers of middle class women who entered the teaching and nursing professions from 1920 on, there was little indication of what the employment of working women in Fiji was after 1920. The Fiji Census Reports show that an overwhelming percentage entered 'housework' as their 'occupation'. From being an active, vibrant and colourful working group of women, the working class women were now colourless and invisible. Their activities failed to come to the attention of the authorities who were relieved at no longer having to deal with the 'woman problem' in Fiji. The Indian men had taken over.

The strike action of Indian women in Fiji in 1920 was not an unusual phenomenon at the time at which it occurred. This was the period when the international suffrage movement was particularly strong and women all over the world were taking part in feminist struggles that had repercussions for a range of political, economic and social matters. It is interesting to compare the feminist action of women in Fiji with two other groups of feminists: the Black American feminist movement and the Fiji European and Indian middleclass feminists who began to articulate a feminist position from 1925, five years after the 1920 strike action by working women. The Black American movement is dealt with first.

4. Black American Feminism and Indian Feminism in Fiji: a Comparison

There were many similarities between the economic and political situation of former slave and indentured women in the early twentieth century. Although both had gained their 'freedom' from bonded servitude, the constraints that they faced after emancipation were no less serious than their experience of enslavement itself. Having said that however, I must also point out that the situation of indentured women could never be compared to the condition of slave women. Afro-American slavery was a grossly demeaning and terrifying experience that scarred the slaves forever. The everyday cruelties and the overall horror that the slave women went through was never a feature of indentured women's experience and although the condition of indenture has often been referred to as 'a new system of slavery' it can never be said that indenture was slavery.

But the slave women's resistance to their oppression after slavery ended was similar in many ways to the protests waged by former indentured women. There is a close resemblance between the demands for equal rights of both these groups of women. In her passionate speech to an assembled body of white men and women at an anti-slavery rally in Ohio in 1852, Sojourner Truth had declared her right as a woman to fight for liberation of women workers (Hooks op cit p 159). Challenging the notion that women were too weak to perform their share of manual labour, Truth barred her arms saying:

'Look at me! Look at my arm!...I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me- and ain't I a woman? I could work as much as any man (when I could get it), and bear de lash as well- and ain't I a woman? I have borne five children and I seen 'en mos all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus hear- and ain't I a woman? ' (ibid p 160).

In this speech Truth was calling for recognition of her womanhood as well as her ability to work as well as any man. This was difficult for the white women and men (many of whom were suffragettes) to bear because black women had been treated as slaves for so long that even their sex had become invisible. Black people were servants and

servants were Black people. As Angela Davis puts it: The tautological definition of Black people as servants is indeed one of the essential props of racist ideology' (Davis op cit p 94).

The white women's movement of America restricted the entry of black women into the movement. Although it was possible for the 19th century white feminists to provide a forum for Black women to address their problems and grievances, racism got in the way (Hooks op cit p 161). With no such voice in the white women's movement, Black women had to organise their own platform along the issues that were most relevant to them. The issue of voting rights for women (significant for the white feminists) were scarcely important for Black women whose men did not even have the vote. They were further alienated from the white women's movement when many of the white feminists introduced racist slogans to prevent Black men from getting the vote before white women. The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in August 1920 granted all women the right to vote.

In the 19th century the struggle of Black women was waged over the issue of woman's suffrage, and in the twentieth century, racism, sexism and class politics became interconnected. Black women suffragists found that their right to vote had little impact on their social situation (ibid p 171) and many became disillusioned. Racism was used to keep them from exercising their right to vote and as Black women they could work only in menial jobs. Increasingly therefore, the protest of women had to encompass more than their condition as women.

But not all Black women necessarily acted upon the three-fold exploitation of their labour. After the vote was granted to all women in 1920 many Black women, like their white counterparts withdrew from the movement, possibly because they recognised that the right to vote had not given them anything more than legislative reform. In the face of continuing violence and in the absence of any real changes in their exploitation as workers Black women found it difficult to continue agitating for reforms. However, this was not the sentiment expressed by communist women who were also concerned with the 'triple jeopardy' of racism, sexism and class.

From 1900 there had been a growing group of communist women whose concerns were expressed within the working class movement (Davis op cit p 150). In March 1908 a mass demonstration in support of equal suffrage had been organised in New York's Lower East Side and when the Communist Party was founded in 1919 former Socialist Party women were among its earliest founding members (ibid). The early Socialist Party had not welcomed Black people into its ranks because they were concerned with proletarians only and Black people were either slaves or sharecroppers. But the International Workers of the World focussed explicitly on the problems of Black workers and over the next few decades they attempted to develop a serious strategy of Black Liberation (ibid p 152).

The women who were influential in the communist movement- women such as Lucy Parsons, Ella Reeve Bloor, Claudia Jones and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn all believed that sex and race were manipulated by employers to justify the oppression and exploitation of Black workers (ibid pp 152-153). Although a number of these women were white, it was the plight of the black workers as workers that gripped their attention. Black women were rarely in a position to take part in industrial action because there were only a few of them in industry. It was even more unlikely that they were able to take positions of leadership, although Claudia Jones's vision of the Black workers' movement incorporated the idea that Black women's leadership was indispensable to their people's fight for freedom (ibid p 168). She referred to the 'militancy of Negro women unionists...in the strike of the packing house workers, and even more so in the tobacco workers' strike, in which such leaders as Moranda Smith and Velma Hopkins emerged as outstanding trade unionists' (Political Affairs 1974 cited in ibid p 168). Black women had also instigated the sharecroppers' strikes of the 1930s (ibid).

It is evident therefore that although many Black women took part only in the movement for women's suffrage there were many others who responded to exploitation as workers. These women had also supported suffrage but they were aware that legislative reforms were useful only insofar as white people allowed them access to legislation. In this way they were similar to former indentured women of Fiji. They were

not prepared to be satisfied with the legislated changes in their condition as workers. They were no longer indentured workers, but their condition as workers had not changed. In the strike action of 1920 they protested against their oppression as women workers of colour, exactly like the Black women workers of the United States.

The pacification of the women's strike of 1920 did not mean the demise of the feminist movement in Fiji. It was certainly the end of the women workers movement but irrespective of the constraints imposed by lack of job opportunity and enforced domestication many Indian women joined other types of associations for their self-fulfilment. During the 1920s and 30s two other women's organisations emerged. One was a white woman's movement called 'The Conference of Women Workers' and was organised and run mainly by white mission teachers of the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia, and the other was an Indian women's association called the 'Stri Sewa Sabha'. The Sabha was formed in 1934 and, strictly speaking, its activities are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, although the Sabha was formally set up in 1934, the initial discussions and the sentiments which fostered its establishment had already begun in the 1920s. In the following I discuss the activities and political motivations of both middle-class women's associations in Fiji.

5. Middle Class Feminism in Fiji

The members of the Conference of Women Workers were all practising Christians who were involved in mission charity and education work, mainly among the Indians. Included in the membership were women such as Miss Griffin, Miss Clark, Miss Weston and Miss Hames, all well-known educators of Indian girls in Fiji. The members discussed education matters that had been resolved by the male missionaries and offered opinions for consideration by the Synod. During their 1926 Annual Conference the women advised that a school for girls only (original emphasis) should be opened but that this could offer only part time education in order to attract a greater number of girls whose mothers would permit them to attend classes for shorter hours (M/94/(b) MMSA).

The annual reports of this Conference of Women Workers shows that, far from being a working women's union, it was merely an association of women who were educators of Indian and Fijian girls. Their major concern was Christian education and their reports and recommendations reflected middle-class white mission interests. They were certainly not supportive of women's protests against high cost of living or poor wages, although individual women such as Miss Griffen did attempt to make the Indian women 'independent' by ensuring that they had an education. To their credit however, they visited Jaikumari's supporter Phulkuar in gaol, offering her spiritual support. Eventually Phulkuar was converted to Christianity, was given the name of 'Elizabeth' and did mission work with Indian women. In 1942 she became the president of the Stri Sewa Sabha.

The Stri Sewa Sabha was an association for educated and wealthy Indian women who wished to carry out charity work among their less privileged sisters. As the minutes of the first meeting expressed it, this women's club was formed to 'work for needy Indian women and girls in and around Suva, the aim to be the establishing of a rescue home for girls- and the care of old and destitute women'. The first president was Mrs Steadman, wife of the MMSA Chairman in Fiji, and the treasurer was 'Elizabeth Phulkuar'. From 1934 to the present the work of the Sabha had always involved the care of the 'needy and the destitute'.

The Sabha's membership comprised mostly Indian women, most of whom had been in Suva when the 1920 women's strike was being waged. But the Sabha women were even closer to the events of 1920 than most scholars of Indian history realise for one of their office bearers had been at the forefront of the strike. From being a militant agitator of 1920, Phulkuar was now in a leadership role among the most privileged middle-class Indian women in the country.

This contradiction was reflected in her contributions to Sabha meetings. In one meeting she suggested that a well-known school teacher should be forced to pay maintenance to his former wife whom he had deserted, but in another meeting she urged her associates to protest to the governor about the 'indecent' Indian films that were being shown in Suva. In another meeting she urged members to visit

destitutes more often because they looked forward to such visits. By the 1940s Phulkuar was beginning to make representations to the government for the employment of Indian women as field nurses and midwives.

There could be several reasons for Phulkuar's change of focus. After the deportation of Jaikumari, she could have lost her support and found herself waging a lone struggle against all odds. This would have been a frightening experience for her especially if she thought or was led to believe that she would languish in gaol for the rest of her life. The missionary visits would have shown her a way out, particularly if they promised her freedom in return for conversion. On the other hand, Phulkuar, being an intelligent woman, would have weighed up her options as a feminist and decided that in the absence of a workers' movement she would be better off among other women, especially if they involved themselves in work with Indians in Fiji. There was no guarantee that a workers' movement would have a place for women anyway and so there were few options for her. In the end, Phulkuar became a Christian feminist and waged her struggle from within the system. She continued to work for Indian women of Fiji until her departure for the United States in the 1950s.

Both the Sabha and the Conference of Women Workers reflected the political and economic sentiments of the 1920s. The militancy of the workers' movements had disappeared without any resolutions for women being articulated. In the absence of this, the women were forced to organise along acceptable lines- as educators and medical workers, and as middle-class women from within clearly defined associations rather than unions. It is apparent that the new forms of women's organisations reflected Indian women's increased domestication. They continued to be involved in and support such organisations for the next forty years.

Summary

In this chapter I have argued that Indian working women in Fiji carried their ability to resist plantation exploitation and oppression into the arena of 'free' labour. During indenture women were limited in terms of avenues for resistance. Even those who had become 'free'

were constrained by the indenture of others. It was impossible to mount an effective resistance when so many were still under bonded servitude. In order to wage a powerful protest about the low wages and high cost of food all workers had to confront the government and the companies as 'free' workers. The resistance of 'free' workers had to be waged on different terms than that on plantations.

The 1920 women's strike was remarkable for its wide-ranging focus on race, class and sex questions. Women waged their protest on all fronts - as waged workers, as consumers and as women of colour. This resistance could only be waged simultaneously because the exploitation of women during all the years of servitude, either as unfree or as 'free' workers in Fiji, had encompassed all areas of work- they had been waged workers, they had been wives and mothers, and they had been sexual objects. The accumulation of wealth in the colony for the past sixty years of servitude had been as a consequence of women's labour. Women's wages had always been less than that of men, women had to work harder than men, usually in several occupations simultaneously, and women's children (ie the products of their labour) were the future workers always needed by the labour-hungry CSR. It should come as no surprise to learn therefore that women's resistance had to be waged on all these fronts. Under plantation conditions, they had certain limited avenues of protest which they utilised in full, but under conditions of 'freedom' they hoped to attack wealth/power, whatever its colour or sexual basis, freely. That they were prevented from conducting this with total success is evident from the incidences of male violence that followed. This was expressed by men both individually and by military backing from Australia and New Zealand.

After 1920 Indian women disappeared from official history. As housewives and women engaged in 'domestic duties' they were of no interest to anyone except Indian men who now benefitted from their labour in the home. The more 'successful' middle class women who became teachers and nurses spent their time educating young Indian girls to conform, so that by 1930 a large proportion of young Indian women were being taught that domestication and the upholding of male honour was their bounden duty, and that to challenge this would bring down the wrath not only of men but also of the gods, upon their

heads. The fear of this served to confine some women to certain acceptable occupations and, in the absence of paid work, the majority to a state of permanent domestication.

The feminist politics expressed by Indian women in 1920 were different in focus from the feminism of Indian and European women after 1925. The middle class movement of the late 1920s and 30s was directed more towards charity work. The 1920s movement was a workers movement because women were resisting their exploitation as workers. In this sense they were similar in their politics and expression of protest to the Black American former slave women of the same period who also articulated their protests on the basis of their position as black women workers. Thus there was a fundamental difference of political focus between Indian women of 1920 and Indian and European women in the period of reconstruction.

CHAPTER 9 SETTLEMENT AND MARRIAGE- THE IDEOLOGY OF DOMESTICATION

The first Indians ever to have settled permanently in Fiji were those who had made the pioneering journey on the ship Leonidas in 1879. Out of 450 adults who survived the voyage, 290 applied to go back to India at the end of their indentures (Lal 1982 p 67). It is unclear how many of these actually exercised their rights to a return passage and left for India, but Fiji was apparently preferred as a place of settlement for those who remained.

The settlement of Indians in the Colony at the expiry of their indentures was not left to chance. CSR officials were quite keen to settle Indians in the vicinity of the mills and large estates so that an experienced and reserve labouring population would always be at hand. To this end the government officials obliged. They instituted certain regulations which made the settlement of Indians easier to achieve, setting aside various tracts of land for their use. Moreover, the limits placed on the ability of Indians to return to India after their first term of indenture had expired had the desired effect. Since few Indians could afford the return trip it was easier to settle, often with no thought of permanency but with a desire to make enough money and to survive until the passage home could be afforded. But after ten years residency there was no longer a compelling need to return home to India. Eventually the number of 'free' settlers outnumbered those who were indentured and until 1920 they were a substantial part of the plantation labour force despite the fact that CSR officials were wary of them as trouble-makers.

At least ten years before indenture ended CSR had become aware that it was only a matter of time before immigration from India would be stopped. In preparation for this the officials set up a small farm tenancy and contractor system of cane production. Under this initial scheme Indians could produce cane under certain conditions for the mills. Various other schemes were tried. The CSR eventually settled on the small tenant-farmer scheme which permitted company officials a certain amount of control over cultivation, harvesting and prices. The evidence presented below shows that the small-tenant farmer was the

tenant the company officials preferred because farm labour was provided by unpaid wives, and later, children. They were aware that cane could be produced most efficiently by an individual farmer who used the free labour of his wife (and family where applicable) enabling the CSR to avoid the production costs involved in hiring waged labour.

Apart from the small farmer scheme of cane cultivation, CSR officials also leased large tracts of land to 'contractors'. The leases were usually given to Indian men who could then sub-lease to Indian tenant farmers. The privilege and money gained in this way enabled a separate Indian 'landlord' class to emerge which had interests in common with the CSR. Thus CSR were able to generate two classes of Indian farmers in the Colony- those who were small-holders, usually indebted to the CSR Company or Indian money lenders, and contractors who had more money and eventually more political clout.

Women's position worsened under these new cultivation schemes. As wives of small tenant farmers, women were compelled to work on the farm, sowing cane seeds, weeding, and preparing food for the harvesters as well as planting subsistence foods for family consumption. In contrast, the wives of wealthy farmers were able to employ other more impoverished women to do their housework. With settlement came not only a change in world view of the male Indian, but a significant altering of the work responsibilities of women.

In this chapter I present the view that the settlement of Indians had further negative implications for women's independence in the spheres of work and politics. I argue that the women, who had formerly been paid as indentured servants under the employment of the CSR, became unpaid workers whose labour nevertheless contributed to the surplus accumulated by the CSR in Fiji. I also make the point that this work situation was legitimated by the patriarchal ideologies of marriage and religion. Women's position as unpaid workers on farms was concurrently idealised and celebrated through these ideologies which hitherto had been absent on plantations.

In more general terms I argue that despite indenture having many negative implications for women's autonomy, women could still claim work if they wanted it. They also had a relatively independent and public existence. Settlement of Indians however had the opposite effect. It served to contain women within the confines of the home and eliminated them from public life. Farm women still provided their labour, but as settlement and family membership grew bigger, women were virtually in purdah as a consequence of the rules of marriage and kinship based on gender hierarchy. Although Indian men were successful as public figures and political leaders after indenture, women were encouraged to look after the home front, and rear the next generation of Indians for Fiji.

This was achieved by several methods. First of all the settlement schemes of CSR officials assumed that the 'wife' of the Indian cane farmer would be involved in domestic 'duties'. Their schemes were formulated on the basis of this assumption. Secondly, Indian men were anxious to escape the individualistic and rigorous work of the plantation, preferring to lease their own farms. This in turn released them from some of the drudgery of indenture. This meant they needed a 'wife' to help them out. Thirdly, settlement of Indians inevitably brought up questions of inheritance and so, unlike the situation under indenture, the fidelity of women and some permanency of marriage was expected. Finally, with reconstruction, questions of religion and culture compelled Indian women to act in accordance with the religious teachings of all Indians whatever their religion. This meant, unlike the spiritual chaos of indenture, that patriarchal religious rules were being defined more clearly for farm women. In general terms I argue that rules of kinship, marriage and religion were all ideologies constructed by men to enhance and further the exploitation of the labour of women workers. In order to comprehend the processes by which women were suddenly withdrawn from paid work and relegated to 'housework' and 'subsistence' work, an examination of the settlement schemes becomes necessary.

1. Indian Land Settlement During Indenture- an Overview

Although the labourers could always re-indenture to their plantations for a further five year term, comparatively few exercised this

option. This is not surprising considering how difficult the labourers' first five years on plantations had been. Yet in the absence of other types of work, except for hawking and trading, many Indians were forced to live in rough settlements around the plantations and mills. When required they hired out their labour to the CSR. Bonuses and land were offered as inducements to re-indenture but few Indians obliged; in 1893 only 208 men were serving under re-indenture. This had increased to 515 as late as 1912. Others worked for the CSR and other sugar companies under the Masters and Servants Ordinance, especially in the peak season (Gillion op cit p 138). CSR officials were not overly enthusiastic about the employment of 'free' Indians because it was believed they caused trouble among the indentureds (ibid). Yet towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth century free labourers were beginning to outnumber the indentureds. By 1911 just over half of the plantation workers were those who were not indentured (Anderson 1974 p 38). Among the time-expired Indians, the proportion of females in the total population was more than that recruited for indenture; by 1911 this was 62.4 women for every 100 men (ibid p 39). Nearly 70 per cent of the total Indian population in Fiji was between 15 and 40 years of age. They were in their prime and would have been considered most suitable as workers. Of the total, 60 per cent of the men and only 20 percent of the women were unmarried (ibid). In 1911 therefore, the female component of the 'free' population was mostly young, unindentured, and defined themselves as married.

Although CSR's general policy was not to employ women workers after their indentures expired, the labour of 'free' women was used in specific instances when there was a shortage. Thus no hard and fast rule about the prohibition of women workers were made. Even as late as 1923 CSR's list of wage rates on its estates showed that women were still eligible for work as labourers. The wage rate of 'free' women was six shillings and sixpence per week, made up as one shilling and tuppence for five days of the week and seven pence for Saturday (CSR F.4.0.3) This wage was certainly better than that paid to indentured women during the whole period of indenture in Fiji, but was much less than the weekly wage given to 'free' men. The lowest paid job for the

men on estates was that of 'messenger' but even this commanded a better wage (10/- per week) than what the women received (ibid).

In 1883, when the first of the Indians became 'free', plans were being discussed by the government for their settlement, and by 1887 provision had been made for them to settle at Vatuwaqa, near Suva. Vatuwaqa was chosen because it was sufficiently far away from the European residential areas of Suva where the Indians had illegally begun to settle. As the AGI told the Colonial Secretary, 'Owing to their insanitary habits and readiness to quarrel it has been proposed and is by some authorities considered advisable to remove their settlement to a point more distant from the residences of the white population: but where nevertheless they could be under sanitary control and police supervision' (CSO MP 85/1125). About 170 acres were set aside. This land was surveyed into allotments of about one acre, to provide enough land for housing as well as space to grow subsistence crops (Anderson op cit p 20). Although the Indians who settled there were no longer keen to work for the planter, they did take up other employment in the towns. Many became small-time tradespeople and hawkers. Eventually a further settlement was opened up at Samabula, also close to Suva, and here the Indians became involved in growing food crops for the town markets.

By 1888 the native Fijians were beginning to ask the colonial officials about the future status and rights of Indians in Fiji. The Fijian Native Council called upon Thurston, the Governor, and expressed concern at the growing number of Indians in the Colony, asking him 'to explain to us the future position of those who are likely to settle in the Colony' (ibid p 17). The Governor made it clear that although a large number of Indians had entered the colony,

'the number of settling Indians is not likely to rapidly increase; and it is yet an open question whether they will settle in any number. As British subjects they may settle if they wish; and if properly settled, it is not unlikely that they may be useful and good neighbours to you Fijians....As to the future position of those Indians who may settle in the country it is this: they will either settle in towns like Suva and Levuka as house servants, or as gardeners, masons, roadmakers,

petty storekeepers, and so on; or they will rent land and settle in the country- out of towns..' (ibid p 18).

The colonial officials expected that Indians would continue to provide their labour after their indentures finished. There was certainly no expectation that they would challenge either the political and economic domination of the whites or the land rights of the Fijians.

In country areas, Indians were beginning to make their own arrangements for settling. In 1885 after making private and informal lease arrangements with the local Roko and two Bulis at Navua, several of them settled on Fiji land. Thurston was vehemently opposed to this type of private arrangement without government sanction or control. As he expressed it,

'When coolies have served 10 years in the Colony as labourers the government will provide such of them as desire it with land whereupon to settle. Anyone in the meantime who aids a coolie to remove himself from the class of labourer to which he belongs, is in effect, just as culpable as the master of a vessel removing coolies from the Colony' (ibid).

Thurston was concerned that the Indian would not get above his station in life. He (or she) had been imported as labourers, and labourers they would stay. The Bulis who had rented land to the Indians were punished by having their pay docked and their employment suspended until the 'coolies' were removed from the land (ibid). Thurston later wrote, in response to the AGI's submission that the term 'free' meant they could settle anywhere, that, 'The primary object of introducing Indian immigrants for 10 years was, and I take it still is, to secure a working population and nothing more (ibid p 19). Even the term 'coolie' was still used despite the emancipation of the indentured Indian.

In order to secure a working population conditions had to be made attractive. When in 1889 the first immigrants became entitled to a free passage back to India the government advertised that commutation of the right to free passage would earn the settler 'such material

assistance in land, seeds, cattle, implements etc etc as may be the fair equivalent of the cash value of the estimated cost of the return passage' (ibid pp 19-20). However, few were interested. There were no applications for land and the instruments of production that government had so liberally promised.

When O'Brien arrived as Governor in 1897 he set up an Indian Settlement Fund of 5000 pounds which was taken from the surplus in the Return Passages Fund (ibid p 21). This money was for purchasing or leasing the necessary land for Indian settlement in the various districts. Stipendiary Magistrates were called upon to furnish the government with information about appropriate areas of settlement. There was apparently a need for close supervision of Indians, but also to confine them to areas near mills and plantations so that they could provide their labour when needed. The area in Labasa was sited near the CSR compound and three acre lots for the planting of paddy were allocated at a rental of 7s 6d per acre annually. The tenants also paid a pasturage fee of five shillings per head and were not permitted to sub-let their plots of land (ibid). The settlement scheme was extended to Navua in 1899 and Nacobi in 1905. In 1906 under im Thurn's governorship the Indian Settlement Fund ceased to exist, being merged into the general accounts. In general terms the scheme had proved to be profitable (ibid pp 21-23). In 1908 a block of land was leased at Dogotuki on Vanua Levu, and two large blocks in northern Viti Levu a year later (ibid p 25)

Initially the tenancy agreements were for 21 years, but in 1910 it was proposed that tenants should occupy their lots under a licence which could be terminated at six-months notice by either party, and the period of lease would remain at 21 years. In 1911 Governor May proposed further research into the settlement scheme arguing that fragmented settlement should be avoided. He was indicating that Indians should be permitted to settle only in designated areas. No clear land settlement policy was instituted with regard to the Indians however. It was not until the CSR proposed a systematic scheme for Indian settlement in 1916, just as indenture was about to end, that the Indians' settlements really became an established practice.

2. Land Settlement- CSR Schemes

(i). The European planter

When the CSR had originally invested in Fiji, in the early 1880s, its officials went against normal company policy. In Australia, CSR had avoided the growing of sugar cane, preferring to buy it from individual farmers or contractors. When its officials began to mill in Fiji the original suppliers, it will be recalled, were Sahl and Smith, two white planters. As far as CSR were concerned, the economic and political rationale for this was that cane could be purchased without CSR having to take on the risks of cultivation, and the planters rather than the company, would face any government intervention that might occur in the industry (Knapman 1987 p 48). This was a well-planned tactic that had been used effectively in Australia.

The Fiji planters were under-capitalised. Reluctantly CSR was forced to lease land on its own account. In order to secure its investment of 15,000 pounds in 1882, in time for the first crushing season, Knox leased 860 acres from Sahl and 800 from native owners. Added to this were 192 acres of freehold. CSR were thus able to cultivate 3500 acres altogether (ibid p 49). Under various types of mortgage facility, CSR officials were also able to secure their product from European planters (ibid p 50).

During the 1880s depression, the white sugar planter was most affected. By 1885 no European planter had shown a profit despite together having provided about 82 per cent of the 1885 crush. By 1890 this was reduced to 20 per cent, the bulk of the cane being grown by the CSR itself (ibid). By the end of the decade many European planters had left the Colony, and the remainder were heavily mortgaged.

Despite the problems faced by the planters, CSR officials still preferred to purchase their cane from independent farmers. To this end they offered 12s 6d per ton to those company employees willing to take up five year leases as tenants on company land or as contractors on other land (ibid p 52). Initially the takers were few, but by 1890 when CSR had invested in new improved cultivation technology including new varieties of cane, individual planters began to take up the offer.

By 1898, of the 8000 acres under cane, just 2,500 were cultivated by CSR (ibid p 53).

The price paid to the European planter for his cane was considered to be too high by the CSR, especially when the international price slumped. In 1902 the company reduced the contract price to 10s per ton of cane with a Pure Obtainable Sugar Content (POCS) of 11 per cent. For each percentage point above 11, an additional 1s 3d was to be paid; and for each point below, 1s 8d was to be deducted (ibid). Ten shillings was the minimum Knox thought the European planter could accept 'and since the POCS of the dominant Malabar cane was usually closer to 10 per cent, this meant in practice a price closer to 8s 6d, the flat rate that CSR paid to Indian growers' (ibid).

CSR apparently expected an increasing number of Indian cane growers to start cultivating for the company's mills. To this end they offered an incentive for Indian settlement by allowing them cash advances at 6 per cent, 4 per cent less than the going rate obtained from merchants (ibid). By the mid twenties, with the incentives provided to Indian growers and the lower price that they could command for their cane, the white planter was phased out altogether (Sutherland op cit p 108, Knapman 1987 pp 52-64).

The low cane prices that CSR officials paid to Indian farmers were insufficient to maintain white living standards (Sutherland ibid). As an official publication pointed out

'the price offered by the company (CSR) though not sufficient to enable European planters to produce sugar cane at a profit is sufficiently high to enable Indian farmers to extract a good livelihood from the cultivation of cane and the company has thus been able to maintain its normal level of output of manufactured sugar' (Sutherland ibid).

This 'thorough going, deep-rooted racism' (ibid) had the effect of phasing out the white farmers altogether, a situation that CSR did not necessarily want, for as the officials saw it the Indians were just a 'tolerable fringe operator- not a portent' (Knapman op cit p 53). The leasing to CSR employees was undertaken in the belief that former

overseers and managers could squeeze out more profits from the labour of the Indians than CSR could on its own estates (ibid p 54).

After 1905 CSR officials were beginning to subdivide and lease all their plantations to former employees and Indians. Between 1906 and 1915 the individual planter did well due to a 7 per cent annual expansion in sugar export tonnage coupled with an annual 3 per cent price rise (ibid p 55). But it was only a matter of time before the European planter faced bankruptcy. By 1916 when the Government of India announced that all indentures were to be shortly cancelled, the European planter called it quits. Without cheap Indian labour he could not grow his cane at all.

The failure of the white planter did not seriously affect CSR officials. Most of the leasehold property had reverted back to the company, and although CSR's general manager advised that the company wished to continue facilitating European grown cane, it did not protect the planters from bearing the brunt of a major slump in 1921. Although the cost of cane cultivation had more than doubled between 1913 and 1921, CSR nevertheless planned a reduction in the cane price to 1913 levels (ibid p 61). Most Europeans quit altogether, horribly aware that CSR would not rescue them from the market slumps. After 1925 they left the country and its cane industry to the impoverished Indian tenants.

(ii). The Indian Settlement Schemes

By 1922 scarcely a white cane planter was left in Fiji. In addition two cane milling companies had also lost the battle with rising production costs and international slumps. The Vancouver Fiji Sugar Company and the Melbourne Trust Company both closed down their mills in Navua and Penang. The Navua mill closed down permanently (Navua not being a particularly good place for cane growing anyway due to its heavy rainfall), but CSR bought Penang Mill in 1926, thus establishing its monopoly in Fiji's sugar industry.

CSR officials had predicted that the cultivation of cane would soon be undergoing major changes. Even during the 1914-1918 war they had realised that European planters might have to give up planting cane

due to labour difficulties. The decision to encourage Indian growers to plant cane in greater amounts had not hitherto been an established practice. In 1897 Knox had attempted to discourage them. He told the manager of Labasa Mill on 16 August.. 'as to free coolies growing cane for us, we are prepared to take this, but as in the case of all non-contract cane, the price should be 6d per ton less than the usual agreement prices' (ABL 142/2055). Indians growing cane in the late 1800s were doing so under extremely difficult conditions. It was only their ability to reproduce themselves for far less than the Europeans that they were able to survive.

By 1904 CSR officials were beginning seriously to consider buying cane grown by Indians. This change of heart occurred because of the imperilled labour supply from India. Writing to the manager of the Labasa Mill, the general manager said that since there was only a slight prospect of getting a further 5000-5500 new coolies from India for the next two years a new scheme for the cultivation of cane had to be thought out. Labour recruitment was getting expensive but also there was increasing cultivation in India itself. This meant that only a few people were interested in leaving for Fiji. We 'need desperately to keep in Fiji those already introduced-preferably in direct connection with our own cultivation or manufacture' (ABL 142/2058 Labasa Outward File).

General Manager Knox proposed several solutions. First, with the intention of reindenturing as many Indians as possible he offered a bounty of six pounds to 'approved' males whose service under indenture was due to expire the following year, and a 10 pound bounty to those willing to re-engage for a two and a half year period up to 1907. Secondly,

'all free men engaged for crushing season's labour and who are not settled as canegrowers on our land...should be made to sign Masters and Servants Agreements and should be paid wages on the same basis as before'.

Thus if men did not re-indenture, then labour was to be obtained under different criteria. Thirdly,

'settlement of coolies on land- we pay 10/- for 13 percent standard with usual variations for all cane delivered by such coolies to end of 1907'.

A settlement scheme for Indians was now being proposed by the top CSR official. Fourthly,

'alternatives to settlement of coolies made available- a. a block of best land near mill and in a suitable position to be subdivided into allotments of 1 acre. On each one man settles without rent, also without proviso as to the use to which land is put, and conditional only upon working for us when called, at indentured labour rates plus 6d per completed tasks, or day of 12 hours worked in and about the mill; b. as an alternative to a. another suitably situated block should be set aside in small allotments, size of which is left to your discretion up to five acres ... for leasing as cane farmers at a rent charge, at option of the lessee of 10/- per acre from date of occupation, or 6d per ton of cane delivered; such settlers not to be under any obligation to work for us, although it should of course be promised that we will always endeavour to provide work when desired by them....the land should not necessarily be of best, although inferior land should not be offered'

In conclusion the general manager said...

'settlement of coolies can proceed under various schemes..circumstances are forcing our hand re labour arrangements in Fiji' (ibid).

At the same time that the manager was outlining these new schemes to make Indians stay on the land and produce cane, he was also asking his managers of individual mills gradually to withdraw employment opportunities for women. In the same document he queried the proportion of women working on the plantation...

'I see that on some of the estates, the proportion of women working varies from 52-58 per cent, whereas on other estates up to 90 per cent are noted as workers. Will you remind me how the present arrangements stand for permitting some of the indentured women to remain away from work; for if

not explained in the AGI's Annual Report, the figures therein quoted for comparative purposes will tend to reflect upon the out-turn of some of our estates' (ibid).

With one stroke of rationality the officials of the company were planning settlement schemes for the Indians as well as removing women from work. By 1913 increasing numbers of women were being removed from work to make place for free men.

The gradual adoption of what officials themselves called 'the boldest experiment in Colonial agriculture during the present century' (Potts: Pam 384 p 6) took place after two other schemes had been tried first. Both these schemes were designed to get Indians to grow cane by themselves. The first experiment which had been suggested by the general manager as early as 1904 and is detailed above, started at the end of 1912 when the Vucimaca Estate of Nausori was divided up into plots and rented to tenants. The tenant would plant a strip of cane in one section, ratoon cane in another, young plant in the third, and leave as long fallow the fourth strip (ibid p 7). The horse work, planting etc was done by the company but the hand work by the tenants. This scheme failed because the settlers were unable to keep to a uniform timetable with their rotational crops. Cultivation had become too mechanical and Indians wanted some say in where and how the crops were to be grown. The control of the CSR was felt to be too harsh and many plots were abandoned.

By 1917 this scheme had given way to what was called the 'large' Indian tenant farming scheme. But the small farmer was not made redundant. The large estates were broken up into areas of about 60 and 80 acres, each of which was again divided up and leased to an Indian tenant farmer. This scheme also failed due to the fact that this large amount of land could not be worked without waged or indentured labour, and both were scarce. That some Indian farmers were nevertheless able to apply for indentured labourers by this stage is revealed by the AGI Report for 1905 when four of them paid the introduction fee for 30 indentureds. Of these workers, nine were women (AGI Report 1905 p 514). This meant that some Indian men were becoming prosperous on their own account. But by 1917 there was no prospect of further shipments of

indentured workers, and both the CSR and Indian planters faced severe problems.

The last phase in the CSR Settlement Scheme occurred after 1921, when the country was still smarting from two crises- the 1920 workers strike and the 1921 cane strike. At this stage cane planting and harvesting had been affected by boycotts and also by labour shortages. In 1923 the industry was threatened. In desperation the company began leasing practically all its estates in single blocks of 10-12 acres each. This was called the Tenant System and, as Potts says, 'was mainly instrumental in saving the industry' (Potts op cit p 8).

From the beginning this scheme was highly profitable for the CSR. In 1925 52 per cent of the total cane area was being cultivated directly by the company and 7 per cent by its Fijian and Indian tenants (ibid). Within eight years these figures were reversed. The Indian tenant farmer has since remained the backbone of the sugar industry in Fiji.

The scheme was successful for several reasons. Although it was the only possibility left after all others had been tried and failed, much research had been conducted into the type of farm most suitable for optimum profitability. One of the most important reasons for the success of the small farmer scheme was that it was efficient and could be run cheaply. A holding of this size was the only one that could be worked most efficiently with 'the full time occupation of the peasant and his family' (ibid p 10). Although other factors such as the price of sugar on the international market, and company control over credit facilities and instruments of labour also led to higher profit margins, it was the productive sphere that was always most significant for CSR in Fiji.

Let us examine this more carefully. It will be recalled that two other schemes had been tried. One was the five-acre holding and the other was a larger holding of between 40-60 acres. The five-acre holding had proved to be a wastage of labour for the tenant did not have enough work to do during the slack season and was thus only a part-time farmer. On the other hand a 60 acre block was too large in the absence of regular labour or a sufficient number of tenant farmers. There was

a wastage of land. But a 10-12 acre block was just right because it could maintain the farmer, his wife, and their children. The labour of the farmer, his wife and two or more children could work the farm to perfection. To this end, the nuclear family was preferred. In support of this there is evidence such as: 'When farms were originally allocated, only married men were, as a matter of policy, selected' (Jayawardena 1975 p 76). Other advantages to the company were derived from awarding fertile rather than substandard land, giving security of tenure and a guaranteed minimum price, schooling in cultivation methods, and the encouragement of certain harvesting procedures (ibid). That this scheme was a great success there is no doubt. In 1923 the production of sugar had been less than 36,000 tons but by 1928 this had increased to 94,000 tons.

The monetary success of CSR in Fiji during this period was unprecedented. Between 1914 and 1923 when there had been a war, a slump, two strikes and the demise of the white sugar planter, CSR enjoyed its most profitable period in Fiji, and thus for its entire business operation; it made 'superprofits' of 13 million pounds. CSR's Australian profits for the same period was 3.7 million pounds, revealing that the Fiji operations were significantly more important (Narsey 1979 and Sutherland 1984). As the company officials said in an official report in 1956, 'during the 1914-24 period, CSR enjoyed the most spectacular monetary success in its history' (South Pacific Enterprise p 299-300 and Sutherland p 110). These 'spectacular' profits enabled the company to sell Fiji sugar very cheaply to New Zealand which was enjoyed by the New Zealand consumers. In gratitude, the government of New Zealand thanked the company (ibid).

It has been assumed that CSR shareholders were able to make so much money from the small farmer sector because of two main aspects of cultivation: in the first place, the company officials controlled the price that they paid for cane. Thus the Indians were compelled to accept less money for the products of their labour than the white planters. In this way racism was used effectively to make profits (Sutherland op cit and Narsey op cit).

Secondly, the company controlled every aspect of production. The officials regulated cultivation practices, including size of plot. They conducted surveillance to see that the farmers were working properly, they had legally binding arrangements that stipulated tending and harvesting of cane, and also the varieties to be grown, they controlled fertilisers and hired out tools and they also controlled credit and tenancy agreements (Sutherland *ibid* p 108). Indians found it easier to take credit from CSR at a lower rate of interest than from Indian moneylenders or finance houses. CSR was also an easier landlord because any termination of contract could take effect after a notice of one year.

There is no doubt that these aspects of CSR cultivation controls were very important in the making of profit. Without such controls CSR could not be sure that the right type of cane and in sufficient quantity would be available for milling. At the same time however, while the domestic unit was ostensibly beyond the direct jurisdiction of the company, its officials were skilled in identifying the type of unit predisposed most readily to its interests. Without the free labour of women and children it would not have been possible for an Indian farmer to grow cane and get it ready for harvest with corresponding efficiency. The very nature of cane cultivation in Fiji compelled the farmer to use the labour of his wife and children. CSR were able to exploit this to maximum advantage.

By 1924 this was being acknowledged by CSR officials themselves. Writing to the general manager in Sydney, a CSR official at Lautoka pointed out.. 'From the number of women and children working on the smaller farms it is evident that the leasing of the land has increased the number of workers in the industry...(ABL 142/2898 Inspectors to H.O. Mills and Others). But in no sense was the labour of the children relied on in the early years of the scheme...'the children about the place being too young' (Dixon to G.M. F4.0.5.5). Some Indians even prevented their wives from working in the cane field, although they were certainly not exempt from other agricultural work, or even from cane work during the peak periods (*ibid*). But a year later Dixon had realised the extent of women's involvement on farms. As he pointed out...'but without doubt by far the most effective means of lessening

the number of wage workers required is to substitute for the latter, to whatever extent may be thought desirable, small farmers to whom the wage question is of little concern seeing that they and their families provide practically the whole of the labour required for their farms' (ABL 142/2923). By this means the company officials were also able to reduce their needs for wage labour, thus under-employing those who did not have farms, and fostering a reserve army of workers in the mill areas.

Dixon's observation that Indian men did not permit women to work in the cane fields is significant. The reason is unclear and unstated. It could be the case that the Indian male, now having economic advantage over the woman could compel her to work in the home, providing him with the services he had been forced to pay for in the 'lines'. Since most women did not have access to their own farms, and had no other means of income (mill work having been denied to them, and other work not available), they would have also been forced to accept this state of affairs. Thus Indian patriarchal attitudes, accompanying absence of work for women, would have immediately relegated them to domesticity, accompanied by certain rules of conduct. As Jayawardena says, indenture itself and the programmes for settlement afterwards seemed to have 'led to the exercise of a greater control (than among the Carribean Indians) of females by males who had customary or acquired rights over them, especially in respect of giving and keeping them in marriage and of confining them to their domestic roles' (Jayawardena op cit p 76).

This 'exercise of a greater control by males over females' could not have occurred without the intervention of the CSR. It was the company officials who set aside an appropriate parcel of land suitable for family labour. CSR made rules about the sex of the person to whom leases would be given. CSR expected the Indian man to employ, without cost to himself or the company, the labour of his wife who, in the early years when her children were young, could not rely on them to help her. Both CSR and Indian men were yet again instrumental in compelling women to produce for no pay. Under such circumstances, and in the absence of other work, women became trapped. Once their

children grew up they were able to get help but until then Indian women were ghettoised into domesticity.

It is difficult to say what precisely was the work of women on these early tenant farms. There are no records to show the extent of women's work. CSR field officers and overseers who kept a close watch on cane production and recorded their observations meticulously for company records talked to male farmers and avoided looking at the women. Women's work became invisible.

A reasonable assumption can however be made about women's work from an analysis of work done on a contemporary farm in Fiji. In 1986 I undertook to examine farm women's work in a cane growing district in Ba. Since cane production in Fiji is still labour intensive, particularly in terms of women's work, it can be said that the work of women in contemporary times is not vastly different from that of early farm women. The difference would have been in terms of the size of the farm, for by 1985 most families had acquired more land. (This fieldwork was carried out in December and January 1985-86 at Veisaru).

a. Case Study: Women's work on cane farms

The 62 acre farm that I stayed at over a total period of about six weeks at different times of the year was located in a heavily populated cane growing area outside the town of Ba, on the western side of Viti Levu. The farm comprised two households, at the head of which was the eldest son, whose mother, Kalawati, still lived and was the senior woman of the house. Kalawati's husband had been the original 12 acre lessee but he had since died and left his lease to the sons, not to his wife. As the family had grown up, the original homestead had been extended around a central courtyard to cope with the increasing numbers of people.

During my last visit, the cane was being harvested, a matter of some urgency for a delayed harvest could ruin the content of the sugar. Thus the householders were particularly busy. The men left the homestead at 5 am and did not return until nightfall when the last cane trucks left for the mill. This gave me a chance of observing women at work unimpeded by male interference or curiosity.

Since the men (two brothers) left for work at dawn everyday, their wives rose at 4 am to cook their breakfasts. The wives of the two men did different jobs and had different responsibilities as befitted senior and junior wives. Since the two had separate kitchens (due to bad feeling, the source of which was not clear but appeared to have something to do with the prestations at the wedding of one of them), they cooked separately for their husbands. But during the day the women cooked and ate together.

For breakfast women made roti (a thin bread), vegetable curry and chutney. This was cooked on an open fireplace which was built of a mixture of cow dung and soil, and redone once a week. Firewood had been gathered by the children earlier in the week. During the year, the children did their chores despite having to go to school. Most of their chores were organised around their school hours. While the wives cooked breakfast for the men in the lean-to kitchen, the divorced daughter of the house washed dishes from the night before. Water was pumped from a hand pump with a hose attached to it. Until 1984, when the pump was built, women had to get water from a well a reasonable distance from the house.

As the men ate their breakfast, which was served to them individually on a plate by their wives, the senior woman, Kalawati, supervised the children's early morning chores. The eldest girl, 13 year old Shareen, washed and cut potatoes for the women and children's breakfast, and a 10 year old girl, daughter of the second son and his wife, swept the verandah with a 'sasa' (a broom made out of coconut frond spines). The younger boys took the family goats and cattle out to pasture for the day. The childrens' ages ranged from 6 to 13, and all had work to do. The youngest children tidied up the compound and ran errands for their parents.

After serving her husband, the younger daughter-in-law started milking by hand. She had been given a cow as her dowry by her parents, and she was personally responsible for milking the cow, although the milk was shared by everyone. Three other cows also had to be milked and the divorced daughter helped with this task. Each day they received four

buckets of milk from the cows. One of the cows had a young calf but the women did not allow it to drink regularly from its mother, saying milk was too precious.

After the milking and cooking, the women ate their own breakfast. Their food consisted of left overs from the men's meal, boiled breadfruit, eggs from the farm chickens, fried spinach, curried red beans, eggplant and hot, sweet tea. All the food eaten on the farm was grown on land adjacent to the homestead. Women tended the garden at all times, but the men sometimes did the heavy work, with reluctance. Even the family rice was planted by women and every year they harvested about 10 bags. Women did not work in the cane fields except in weeding, the most boring and laborious of all cane work. They were, however, solely responsible for all vegetable and rice planting, and care of goats, cattle and chickens.

To return to the day's activities, the female children made the beds, swept out the house and after breakfast, washed all the dishes. By 8 am much of the housework was already done. The older boys sometimes went into the canefields with their fathers but their chores mostly consisted of whiling away time as they watched over goats and cattle in the pasture. Some of them also fetched water and food for the cane gang who were cutting the cane.

The next task for women was to make butter and ghee (clarified butter) from some of the milk. The senior-most woman Kaliwati was always given this task for it required a steady hand and some expertise. She deftly skimmed the top of the milk, churned by her eldest female grandchild who used a crude wooden churn with a rope attached to the end to make churning possible. This task, carried out after breakfast, took two hours. The result was a handful or two of butter which some of the children and men got to eat with bread the next day. Ghee was set aside for use in the making of roti.

By 10 am the women were ready to go into their vegetable gardens. Taking their rakes and hoes, they left for the fields, the younger children following them. For the next two hours they laboured under the hot sun, hoeing between bean and corn rows, or ankle deep in

paddy. At noon they returned to the house to cook lunch for the men. Fresh roti or rice and vegetable curry with dhal was cooked for the workers and by 1 p.m. the lunch was ready to be taken to the men by young boys. Girls did not go into the field while men from outside the family were there.

The women's lunch was taken more quickly. They ate the left overs, fed their children, and got ready for an hours' washing in the river. Huge bundles of dirty clothes were carried on women's heads, and for the next hour the women did their washing- beating the clothes with a wooden mallett, and spreading them on nearby rocks and tree stumps to dry. While the clothes dried, the women bathed themselves and their children in the river scrubbing their bodies clean with river sand. This was also a time for relaxation away from the attention of men and the senior woman, who had been left at home to sleep off her lunch. The women gossiped, traded stories, asked children for information about the cane gang and the work that was being done, and the younger girls talked and giggled about a young man in the cane gang that they both fancied. When the older women realised what the girls were discussing one day, they were both severely reprimanded, and since they were about 12 and 13, a 'dangerous' age, a firm eye kept on their movements from then on.

The women returned to the house at four, and began to cook the evening meal. The senior woman supervised the children and relaxed in the shade of a mango tree under which a bench had been built for this purpose. At six the men returned from the fields, tired, hungry and sunburnt. They showered, were served their meals and relaxed in a lean-to with other men-joking, sharing a smoke and eating ripened fruit from the gardens. Meanwhile the women started their sewing and made several small garments before bed. Alternatively, they prepared vegetables for the next day, or cleaned 'masala' or curry powder for preserving. By about 9.30 or 10pm, the kerosene lamps went out, and the women were fast asleep, exhausted from the days' work. Sometimes the men remained awake for several extra hours, playing cards or chatting with their mates.

This description is of an average day in the life of a canefarmer's wife. She is involved in these chores no matter what the season. Men tend to work very hard during harvesting which is on average twice a year, but during the slack season they are able to rest more and visit their friends in the town or on other farms. However, women are burdened with the same tasks year after year. If the farm is big, like the one described above, she can call upon the labour of other women and children but if the farm is small, comprising 10-12 acres, then she has to carry the load herself. Despite women's obvious work participation, the lease is held in the man's name. Only in unusual cases is a woman allowed to hold a lease. It is understood that cane farming requires particular work methods which are dominated by men. Women find it difficult to organise cane gangs, or call upon company or government help in the purchase and application of fertiliser, or to argue about cane payments. There is thus the pressure to have sons who can take over these roles upon the death of her husband.

The budgeting of the family is usually carried out by the eldest son who allows a certain amount of money to women for their own personal purchases. These may include vegetable seedlings as well as wedding presents for neighbours and relatives. As Jayawardena pointed out in his study of Indian farms,...'although most husbands allow their wives virtual autonomy in running the household and bringing up children, it is recognised as a delegated authority. The husband rather than the wife makes purchases at the store and deals with the store account, though the wives usually shop at the municipal vegetable markets' (Jayawardena op cit p 80). He argues that the position of the wife is largely defined by her duties as a mother and manager of the household under the supervision of the husband; although in the household where the mother-in-law still lives, the supervision is largely her responsibility (ibid). In my own case study women would have to undertake their responsibilities at a very young age. Both daughters-in-law married at 16 or 17, although they wanted their own daughters to get some education, to 'protect' them, as they put it.

The work of women described above is not necessarily different from the work that former indentured women would have done in years past. Twentieth century farm technology improves cane production, not

household production. Women still used the ancient method of churning butter, and only recently had the men invested in a hand pump. Thus, although the farm I visited was a contemporary one, there was little that had improved for women over the years. This was confirmed by Kalawati herself who told me that her work methods had not undergone a significant change since her husband had taken the lease more than 50 years before. But she was pleased that she had given birth to sons whose wives were now able to take a lot of the workload off her shoulders.

Women on cane farms were not 'idle' but were an indispensable part of the farm labour force. Without their subsistence production (sometimes the surplus would be sold in the markets), and their labour for men as their handmaidens, cane production could not be a success. Men would find it impossible to grow their own food crops as well as undertake cash production. But men got paid for the work they did, whereas women were either not paid at all or had to account for every penny they spent. As women got older, they were given some responsibilities as befitting senior women, but this was always delegated by men. This situation was evident on the first cane farms set up by the CSR after 1915, and continues to be a feature of contemporary farms in Fiji.

b. The Invisibility of Women- reconstruction, politics and identity

Women's inability to have a 'public' life impinged upon their right of protest and resistance. Women were silent in all the accounts of the 1921 cane strike. The failure of the CSR and government to build roads, hospitals, schools, provide legislation for fair rents, make available more agricultural land, and compensate Indians for improvement of land by tenants, pay the bonus of one pound per acre of cane planted, and to determine cane prices were reported as causes of this strike (Ali 1980 Chapter 3). There are no records of women. (who had been cane workers only a year previously), having made a statement or written a letter or signed a petition in support of the strike. Within one year women had already been made invisible, relegated to the home sphere only. It would have been unseemly for them to be part of the protest.

The 1921 cane strike, following soon after the 1920 protests, was organised by labourers as well as growers. They called for a wage rate of 5/- a day for men and 3/- for women labourers, 8/6 for sirdars, 10/- for engine drivers, and 8/- to 10/- a day for skilled workmen (ibid p 77). Rations were not acceptable in lieu of wages, and government was asked to repeal the Masters and Servants Ordinance because it resembled indenture (ibid p78). Leadership of the cane strike was in the hands of men; by March of 1921 the demands of the workers had increased to sixteen. The Company retaliated by accusing the workers of making political rather than economic demands. The Europeans argued that the Indians wanted equality with whites and refused even to sit on the same verandah as the Indians to negotiate a settlement, arguing that the strike leaders were not employees of the company (ibid p 80).

As usual, the governor offered the strikers a commission of inquiry to investigate their claims but the company refused to comply with any directives until the Indians had returned to work. One of the leaders was deported, and in exasperation the governor withdrew the commission. The government officials found it difficult to maintain their support of the company but publicly refused to take a stand. However in a private letter to Knox, colonial officials defended the motives of the strikers, urging him to recognise that the grievances were economic. They also argued that the CSR should have been willing to discuss claims the year before and that, in disregarding this, the officials had showed a lack of judgement. The Colonial Secretary argued that unless CSR reached an early settlement government would be forced to intervene (ibid pp 81-82).

The company stood its ground, its officials refusing to pay higher wages. It did not even bother to deny that it was perfectly capable of increasing the pay given to its workers. Knox threatened to withdraw his investments, unless 'coloured labour at fair wages (were) obtainable' (ibid p 85). It will be recalled that Knox had done rather well out of Fiji even to the extent of being exempted from paying company tax until 1921.

On the other hand the labourer had been severely disadvantaged. According to calculations of the time (ibid pp 88-91), a cane labourer with his wife and two children (assuming there were only two), were severely deprived of the basic necessities due to the wage rates that CSR offered. Indians had to rely on money lenders and credit at shops to make ends meet.

The strike went on for months, even after the departure of the leader, Basisth Muni. When on April 9 another deputation, accompanied by a white planter, W.C. Thomas, and Rev Richard Piper of the Methodist Mission, waited upon the governor, the Indians demands were oriented to social inadequacies. They still emphasised poor wages, high cost of living and inability to buy food and clothing, but they also condemned accommodation in the lines as being unsuitable for married people. There was no privacy especially for bathing and for women in child-birth (ibid pp 91-96)

Knox's meagre concessions which were publicised in June were hardly satisfactory. These were that although no wage increases would be awarded and plans for separate housing had not been finalized, necessary food items would be bought in bulk to lower the food costs and the 6d per day bonus would be paid weekly. The Indians stayed out until, finally, in the second week of August, they gave up and began to trickle back to work. Unlike the 1920 strike, this one had been peaceful and few intimidation tactics or physical fights were in evidence. The strike ended with the farmers and labourers no better off than before.

The labourers' demands for better married quarters and privacy reflected their changed perception of themselves after the end of indenture. In the lines, workers had been squeezed in three to a room, with few amenities for private or married living. But CSR policy of settlement, with its assumption that cane would be grown by families was not necessarily reflected in its housing policy. CSR wanted to cut labour costs as much as possible and saw no point in erecting better houses for everyone just because indenture was over. As far as officials were concerned, lines were perfectly suitable for Indians while they were engaged in waged labour on estates, or growing cane

for the mills. In response to a government recommendation in 1915 that 'every effort should be made to provide separate dwellings on approved lines for married couples so that within seven years all married people should have their own detached homes instead of living in the lines' (CSR F.4.0.2. 15), Dixon replied that 'lines' were better for women since they were more protected there from male violence than in the isolated houses where no one could hear them scream if they got into trouble with the men (ABL 142/ 3158). Thus the CSR officials attempted to use the fact of male violence to bar Indians' access to proper living conditions.

In 1915 the idea of a family wage had also been mooted in a confidential despatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The idea of the family wage had first been suggested by Andrews. He argued that if married women were not to be called upon for fieldwork (except voluntarily), they could give 'personal attention during the day to their children, and also they could prepare properly cooked food for their husbands. He wrote: 'it will be necessary in order to make up the loss of earnings thus involved to the married couples to increase the minimum daily wages to be paid to married men say to 1/9d; or to make a weekly allowance to the wife, or to provide for the issue of daily or weekly ration of food to married couples' (CSR F.4.0.2.15). There is no indication of whether CSR officials actually acted upon any of these recommendations. Certainly in the case of farmers this did not apply, but it may well have applied to labourers, although the wage schedules after 1920 do not specify different wages for married men.

Another scheme for growing cane was the system of cultivation by small farmers other than CSR tenant farmers. Known as the 'contractor' scheme, this type of cane cultivation was initially applicable only to native Fijians who had always supplied cane to the mills, initially under the native taxation regulations. In 1889 the total land planted to Fijian cane in Fiji was 940 acres (Potts op cit p 8). But by 1925 Indians were also becoming contractors.

Compared to small farmers, the contractors were much more likely to have farms of over 26 acres. After the end of indenture, the

contractors with large farms comprised what has been defined as the capitalist class of farmer (Sutherland op cit p 117) because they depended upon wage labour. These farmers had to depend on outside labour because it was not possible to use only family labour on farms of this size (ibid). There were certain advantages and disadvantages faced by the Indian contractor. On the one hand these farmers got the same limited deal from the CSR, on the other hand they were in a better position to exploit their own tenants who had restricted tenancy arrangements. For the tenants of Indian contractors, the advantage was less obvious. Previously, most of them had been subject to CSR control only in their cultivation methods and price of cane. There had been some security of tenure, but now the land they were on was owned by Indian landlords who provided little of such security (ibid). Many farmers had to supplement their income by waged labour, thus relying increasingly on women to run the farms during the slack seasons.

Increasingly, wage labour was becoming common in the sugar sector. The small farmers often hired out their labour to the CSR, but there was also another group of landless Indians who were permanent wage labourers, working the CSR estates or working for the individual Indian contractors. For the waged workers and tenant farmers, the exploitation was two-fold; they were subject to CSR control for wages and/or the price of cane, and they were also subject to the control of the Indian landlord class. The Indian political leadership that emerged after indenture ended was drawn primarily from this landlord class who had become sufficiently wealthy to want to challenge European political dominance (ibid p 119).

It will be recalled that in Chapters 3 and 4 I argued that during the period of indenture in Fiji the situation of bonded servitude was required for the development of capitalist dominance in Fiji. I pointed out that since 'free' labour exploitation was not possible in Fiji after Cession, a period of bondage had to be introduced in order to accumulate sufficient capital in the plantation sector. But after indentured servitude came to an end, a situation of 'free' labour did emerge. The people who offered their labour power for sale offered it under a condition of 'freedom', i.e. they had no other means of

earning their living besides working for a wage. With the availability of such 'free' labourers it could be said that capitalist relations were beginning to dominate production in Fiji and that the period of transition to capitalism was over.

There is a certain difficulty with this view however. The 'free' labourers who were beginning to offer their labour power for sale were not necessarily removed entirely from other means of production. In actuality the end of indenture had made it possible for the 'free' labourer to have access to other means of production, a situation that had been impossible during indenture. It was a curious situation for capitalist production; under indenture, when the labourers had no access to means of production they had been bonded, but under 'freedom' they suddenly had access to means of production given to them by the CSR. Were the 'free' labourers and peasants therefore proletarians or peasants? Or, more to the theoretical point, had the transition to capitalism been achieved in Fiji by 1921?

A large proportion of the cane was grown by tenant farmers. Outside the cane sector Fijians were still producing crops for tax, some of which was cane also. In the towns there was increasing evidence of waged labour by 1921. Although employment statistics of the period under analysis have never been tabulated, it is estimated that waged labour in the non-sugar sector never exceeded 10,000 (ibid p 120). Until the 1930s most of the waged workers were concentrated in the sugar areas. Thus in order to discuss whether Fiji was a capitalist country by the end of indenture, we must concentrate on employment in the sugar sector.

It is impossible to say exactly how many people were employed as waged labourers after indenture ended because most tended to offer their labour power spasmodically. The CSR's fostering of the reserve army also makes it difficult to calculate the number of waged workers for most were in subsistence farming and worked for a wage only when required. However the evidence needed to discover whether capitalist relations were in dominance is not confined to the numbers in the waged labour force. In some cases, and under specific conditions, it is possible to see some aspects of peasantry as constituting

capitalist relations. This is discussed with reference to recent literature below.

c. The Indian small farmer- proletarian/peasant?

Fiji's small farmers and contractors after indenture had all the appearance of being peasants growing a commercial crop for the international market. They did not own the land they worked, but had some measure of control over it for a certain number of years, and they produced using family labour and hired workers. At this point I will leave aside the situation of the contractors working their farm with hired labour and deal first with that of the small farmer, i.e. one who leased his farm from the CSR or individual Indian and worked it using the labour of his family.

Although the small farmer had access to his means of production, this was mediated by a contract. If the farmer was unable to produce, he could be evicted from the land. (In Fiji this was rare because most were able to pay their rent and their expenses, although many were in debt). All the farmer had was usufruct, not ownership of the means of production. He grew his crops under strict supervision which included control by CSR field officers over the seasonal variations in crop, fertiliser, horse work and use of implements. CSR also controlled the price of cane, the value of POCS, and harvesting and delivery. In terms of actual control over the products of their labour the Indians were severely disadvantaged. They were in effect labourers, cultivating for the CSR in the same way that they had done under indenture. In other words they appeared to be working for the CSR for a 'hidden wage'. Although the producer was not separated from his/her means of production, this was alienated from him/her to a certain extent. If the moneylender or the CSR decided to foreclose, then the farmer lost everything. In this sense then, the Indian small farmer appeared as a 'proletarian'- working for industrial capital (invested in agriculture) for a payment which was supposed to cover his and his family's costs of reproduction. That Indian farmers recognised that the cane payments were for their reproduction is indicated by their demands for more money to cover living costs during the 1921 canefarmers strike.

But the small farmer was more than just a hidden proletarian. He had not been alienated from the land. Part of his reproductory costs (often all of it) could be met from the land. The farmer's wife planted vegetables, raised chickens, goats and cattle, and undertook various cottage industries to enable the family to earn an income separate from the sugar sector. This meant that the CSR, as the capitalist firm, could not rely on the farmer having no other means. The farmer was not compelled to accept just what officials felt like offering. The 1921 strike was a protracted one, unlike that of 1920 when waged workers were compelled to go back to work because they had nothing more left to eat. The canefarmers strike was able to last for much longer because basic food necessities could be produced on the farm. Their ability to do this shows that the farmers were not proletarians either. For one thing, they were not free to offer their labour power to anyone for sale, bound as they were by a contract to produce sugar cane only for the CSR (there being no other miller in Fiji), and also they were far from alienated from their means of existence. This means that Fiji's small farmers were neither peasants nor proletarians. They could be referred to as 'semi-proletarians' (1) because the payment they received could be seen as a 'hidden wage', or as independent farmers or even 'semi-peasants' who retained some control over their means of production and reproduction despite growing crops for the capitalist markets, the value of which was realised only at the level of circulation. The industrial capitalist control over payments and loans inhibited the individual peasant's choice over whom he could offer his labour power to, which limited even further his ability effectively to become a proletarian. In this sense the Indian farmer was both similar to and different from the Fijian 'peasant'. Both grew crops for the market under certain conditions of unfreedom, yet both had a certain leeway in terms of how they reproduced themselves and their families. However while the Indians had little security of tenure, the Fijians could always subsist on the land without fear.

If one takes the evidence of sugarcane production alone, then it is possible to conclude that male farmers were semi-proletarians or semi-peasants. The farmers were working for a sum of money that would have reflected a 'wage' had they been involved in industrial factories

rather than farms, and profits were being made from production, not just from circulation. Furthermore there was increasing employment of waged workers who were not farmers, and re-investment in new technology and farm cultivation methods by the CSR, an indication that money was being made to generate more money, and not merely for the purchase of luxury items as under merchant capital. Additionally there was the emergence of contract farmers who employed waged labour rather than working themselves or parcelled out their land under various tenancy agreements to small farmers. The people who worked for them certainly had no security of tenure.

However it would be a mistake to argue on the basis of male activity alone that capitalist relations of production (or alternatively non-capitalist relations) were in evidence in Fiji at this time. Over matters of definition of the mode of production, women's unpaid labour carried out under unfree relations of production is often ignored. This leads in my opinion, to an inadequate description of the existing mode of production. In the case of Fiji the male farmers may have worked for a 'hidden wage' but the women had no wage at all. Their production enabled CSR to lower the cost of male labour power. Thus two forms of unfree labour were being exploited on the farms. The first was the labour of the farmer who was not paid adequately for the costs of his reproduction and secondly the labour of the woman who was not paid at all. Both sets of workers, male and female, were bound to their work by a contract, indicating that unfree relations of production were in evidence in the sugar sector. The man was bound by CSR contract and the woman was bound by the marriage contract. While the 'hidden wage' may have been paid to the farmer, the unfree relations that he and his wife worked under could not possibly be seen as evidence of capitalist relations of production. We can offer the view therefore that even after indenture, capitalism had not become dominant in Fiji and that the transition was still incomplete.

The intensification of household labour was possible only because of the patriarchal form of the family which compelled the woman to produce goods for subsistence for no reward, and also to produce children. Women's ability to work on the farm, produce babies and rear them as individual workers enabled the CSR to purchase the cost of

cane from farmers below its value. The mass of surplus value produced for the CSR was achieved through the lowering of raw material and food costs. This was similar to the contemporaneous situation of contract farmers in tobacco production in Kenya (Curry and Ray: 1986) and the Venezuelan coffee farmers (Roseberry: 1978).

The patriarchal form of the family that emerged after indenture was crucial if the Indian farmer was to survive exploitation by the CSR. For the cane farmer who had only recently ended his period of indenture and wished to cultivate cane, it was possible to earn a living only if two important conditions were met; first of all he had to be able to obtain a lease either from Fijian landowners or from the CSR, and secondly, he had to show that he could find himself a wife.

3. Labour of Love? Work, Politics and the Indian Marriage Ordinances

Finding a wife during indenture was difficult. The plantation prohibited permanency of relationships, and few women were interested in marrying for good. Low wages of the indentured people hindered marriage and permanent associations. Moreover the marriages that did occur were not recognised in law. These constraints proved to be a major impediment in the marital identification of Indians.

Settlement was another matter. Once his indenture had expired the male Indian was much more likely to get resources if he were married. He could lease a defined area of land and farm cane for the CSR or other crops for the town markets. When CSR held a monopoly over cane cultivation the 'free' farmers grew vegetables for the market or other crops like bananas. The average small-holding was manageable with a wife and small children. This meant that questions of more permanent gender relations were raised by the Indians themselves.

Prior to 1893 marriages of everyone in the Colony except Fijians were registered under the same law. The Births Deaths and Marriages Registration Ordinance of 1886 laid the ground rules for all marriages solemnised in Fiji. Any marriage ceremony conducted by a minister of religion or person ordinarily officiating in this capacity was valid and legal (CSO MP 3336/1889). Under indenture however, marriages of Indians were declared valid only if they were registered by the

Protector of Immigrants and sometimes by a magistrate (Tinker op cit p 202). Those Indians wishing to declare their marriage had the additional difficulty of access to these administrators. They tended not to register officially as married. This was exacerbated by the paucity of customary celebrants at the depots, ships and plantations. Furthermore, like the slaveholders before them, many of those who were in charge of coloured labour were less interested in the workers marital status than in their ability to work. Many requests for registration of marriages by indentureds themselves may well have been ignored. Moreover there was no state regulation of Hindu marriage in India (Gillion op cit p 125). This proved to be an insurmountable problem both for those wishing to be married and for those who had to administer such requests.

In 1892 a form of civil marriage was established in Fiji whereby immigrants who declared themselves as 'husband and wife' upon arrival in Fiji were registered as such, and others paid five shillings on declaring their intention to be married before a magistrate. The banns were read for three weeks, after which period the couple received a certificate from the AGI to the effect that they were married. There was no ceremony or ritual and no marriages other than those registered under the Immigration Ordinance were considered legal. A previous marriage, or that solemnised by religious authorities and celebrants, (even by a Christian minister after 1903) was considered invalid. The CSR position on Indian marriages before the regulations came into effect was similar to the attitude of American and Carribean slaveholders; marriages could not be allowed without permission from the company, and those who flouted this rule were punished.

Once Indian settlements started individual Indians began to challenge the prohibitions on marriage. The first organised agitation for a more satisfactory form of marriage law came from a combination of religious bodies. These argued in a petition that an Indian Marriage Ordinance was necessary to eradicate some of the social evils of the indenture system. The first questions were raised as early as May 1897. A male Indian by the name of Madar Baksh complained to the AGI that the Stipendiary Magistrate at Macuata, N Chalmers, had refused to register his declaration of marriage to Sania because they were indentured to

different plantations (CSO MP 2198/1897). The Colonial Secretary asked the magistrate for an explanation. In reply he gave the information that several declarations of marriage had been refused to free men and indentured women. Madar Baksh had been refused and also previously fined for harbouring a married woman. The Stipendiary Magistrate argued that he was against registering marriages of free men to indentured women whose term of indenture would not expire for another 3-4 years. He was compelled to take this action because the CSR would not employ 'free' coolies unless they re-indentured. Most male Indians did not re-indenture and hoped instead to commute their wives' indentures. This practice was objected to by the company....

'My own personal opinion...is that these so to speak unequal marriages are a constant source of trouble for the reasons given, and that so long as it is known that such applications are refused there will be no application. I have had none of this nature for months' (ibid).

Thus even the Stipendiary Magistrate, who was a government appointee refused to marry Indians because it went against the company's policy. Regardless of whether Indian 'free' men could commute their indentured wives' indenture, the company and the magistrate refused to let them be married. In response to the Stipendiary Magistrate's reply the colonial secretary said that although the matter was before the governor for consideration, the Magistrate had no power to refuse marriage applications and urged him to conform to the law in future. Madar Baksh probably had no idea that his complaint had caused such problems within colonial government ranks!

Although the Stipendiary Magistrate accepted the rebuke, he was forced to argue that some modification of the Indian Marriage Ordinance was necessary to accommodate free men wanting to marry indentured women. In desperation many men reindentured so that they could be with their wives (to CSR's advantage); others could not have this option because the company considered them troublemakers. '...consequently, he abandons his wife and child or children and the poor creature has to support herself and her children for 2/- a week or nine-pence a day supposing she earns full pay..when her time expires she is thrown onto

the colony for 5 years as a destitute Indian...again many good men re-indenture who have very objectionable partners. After re-indenture the employer may not allow the woman to stay with her man in the lines-she has nowhere to go. The husband becomes discontented and trouble arises-the police are called in to interfere' (ibid).

Although the colonial officials attempted to blame all troubles on Indians themselves, arguing that the trouble makers were getting married only to challenge plantation regulations, this particular case revealed that CSR officials were in the practice of refusing their labourers permission to marry. Many Indians married anyway but when found out were taken to court by the CSR. Upon request, the CSR manager in Fiji, Gemmel Smith, furnished the colonial secretary with a list of Indians who had 'married without the permission of their employer'. Smith pointed out to the AGI that the marriages of Indians should not be 'sanctioned by you before the persons in question have obtained the employers' permission and the man agrees to pay the transfer fee for himself or the woman as the case may be. I would add that great annoyance and confusion is caused by these marriages' (ibid).

Although the number of Indians who had defied the CSR by marrying against their wishes was small, the colonial officials realised that the issue was serious. As liberals favouring the element of 'choice' in personal matters, they were horrified that the CSR was denying their labourers permission to marry, particularly when they heard from a Jaijai Singh that he had been fined by a magistrate for visiting his wife in the 'lines'. Singh was 'free' but his wife was not, and he was prohibited from visiting her. Singh leased some land from a Fijian landowner, but the company and the magistrate ran him off his property. He was forced to go elsewhere to earn his living, leaving his wife behind in the lines. When this case was brought to the attention of CSR by the AGI, and was later discussed by the Attorney General as well, the Attorney General went to the company's defence, arguing that the employers had the right to keep any 'undesirable' person off a plantation'. Although Jaijai Singh had been asked to reindenture, he had refused and since he did not have enough money to cancel his wife's indenture, she had to stay on the plantation while

he was exiled. Eventually the Resident Inspector of Immigrants took matters into his own hands and cancelled the woman's indenture himself. Gemmel Smith reported this to the AGI, indicating that this was bad practice and was viewed by him as interference in the affairs of the company. To make sure of the immigration department's ground the AGI asked the inspector if coercion had been used to force the CSR manager to cancel the indenture of the woman but he was assured that this had not been the case (ibid).

In this instance the cases that came to the attention of the AGI and Colonial Secretary were handled individually. Each case was dealt with on its merits. Nevertheless it was clear that some regulation was needed. However nothing further took place until May 1903 when the 1893 ordinance was amended by a new definition of 'immigrant' (all of Indian 'blood' were seen as 'immigrants'), and by the repeal of the section that permitted Indians to get married under Christian law, thus denying them Christian rites of marriage. The new amendment stipulated that anyone with 'Indian blood' in Fiji who desired to be married had to conform to the Indian Marriage Ordinance. A set procedure had to be followed: they had to signify their desire to the magistrate of their districts; the banns had to be read for three weeks from the date of application; the certificate was to be forwarded to the AGI in Suva by the Magistrates; and the AGI had to register the marriage and send a copy of the certificate of marriage to each partner (MMSA M/31 1912-18). The irony of this long process and this procedure by the authorities is shown in it having nothing to do with personal relations of the parties involved because neither of the parties had to be present at the time of registration of their marriage. The marriages had more to do with keeping the books correctly than with cementing a permanent relationship between two people of the opposite sex. They did not even have to appear together to declare their intention to be married. If they did not live in the same district they could appear in front of the magistrate at different times and in different places. The certificates were eventually issued to the magistrates of the districts from which the married couple originated and were then passed on to both parties. There was no ceremony attached to the procedure; it was purely a

business and legal arrangement as far as the authorities were concerned.

The ceremony of Christian Indians was also not recognised. In 1913 the Reverend Cyril Bavin of the MMSA was prosecuted by the government for marrying two Christian Indians without first applying for the AGI's certificate. Bavin was supported in his actions by a deputation from all Christian bodies in Fiji who waited upon the Governor, urging him to recognise all religious marriages. Included in this request was support for the recognition of Hindu and Muslim religious marriages, the senior missionaries of the Society arguing that in India the marriages conducted by priests (even those who were quasi priests) were considered to be legal.

The Christians were joined by the small Indian 'free' settlers (all male) who were anxious that some permanency should mark their relationships and that this could best be done if there was legislation permitting religious leaders to solemnize marriages. This sentiment was fostered by the 1913 murder of Surumah, Parbatia and Lal Bahadur, referred to in Chapter 6. The movement's concern was that Indian marriages taking place on or near plantations were masking a trade in females. This could be stopped if marriage was considered to be permanent, thus binding both parties, but particularly women, to the union. When Indian men wrote to the governor asking for leniency for those men who killed their wives out of jealousy, the impression was created that women were being murdered because of the immoral status of unmarried women, and of those who refused to remain married.

This petition had the desired result. The Governor appointed a committee to look into the Indian Marriage Ordinance, with a brief also to examine the connection in Fiji between the Indian Marriage Ordinance and Crime and Prostitution (CSO MP 9107/13). Many religious leaders (most of them under the direction of Manilal) submitted their views for consideration and the final report took them into account.

The Christian missionaries were influential in drafting the actual provisions of the new regulations. In a letter to the governor in 1913, Rev Small, Head of MMSA, the Bishop of Polynesia, the vicar of

St Andrews Presbyterian Church, Cyril Bavin 'missionary to the Indians', and R Mathews, 'chaplain to the British in Suva and 'missionary to Heathen' all stated their view that the following were necessary in any marriage rules that affected 'civilised people': the consent of the parties; consent verbally expressed in the presence of each other; and consent expressed in the presence of witnesses. They also wrote that some form of acknowledgement was necessary in a marriage ceremony which the Indian Marriage Ordinance did not provide. They argued that the Indian Marriage Ordinance as it stood was an unnecessary piece of 'class legislation' unworthy of 'this British Colony inasmuch as it places the Indians under a ban to which neither Europeans, Samoans, Chinese, Japanese, Melanesians, nor any other immigrants to Fiji have to submit'. They also pointed out that according to the rules of the present Indian Marriage Ordinance the Indians were deprived of the right they possessed in their own homeland, which was one of being married according to their own customs...

'We desire to express our conviction that the Indian Marriage Ordinance is so unsuitable to the needs of this Colony that indirectly it is responsible for a great proportion of the immorality and crime amongst the Indian people...Your Excellency must be aware how frequently the most serious cases tried in the Supreme Court have the marriage question as their background'.

Without religious and cultural rites, the 'unprincipled Indian evaded family responsibility, sometimes put his wife and child to sale in the interval between betrothal and puberty, leading to quarrelling strife and sometimes murder'. The signatories also drew the governor's attention to the numbers of unmarried people in the Colony, despite its shortage of women, compared to India. They also protested against the AGI being the only person under the law who was permitted to marry Indian people legally. They urged the Governor to repeal the 1892 Ordinance and place on the statutes a new Ordinance wherein Christian Indians would not be barred from marrying and where religious ceremonies of Indians would be allowed (ibid).

The government officials discussed this letter, the AGI arguing that the missionaries were exaggerating and that the Indian Marriage Ordinance of 1892 was designed to benefit Indians. He also accused the missionaries of being incompetent to deal with some of the matters under review (ibid). Officials also refused to believe that immorality was caused by the lack of a marriage ordinance, arguing that the cause of immorality was the scarcity of women and their 'polyandry'. Despite his objections to the petition however, the AGI acknowledged that the marriage question would have to be discussed. The officials recommended that the Attorney General's opinions should be sought. In consequence, an amendment to the Marriage Ordinance of 1892 was passed. This provided inter alia, for strict guidelines for the 'marriages' or betrothals of girls younger than 15. This was approved by Manilal who had consulted a Hindu priest and several of his 'countrymen' (CSO 1382/12). He told the Attorney General that the Indians were very pleased by the amendment (ibid); as it appeared to be satisfactory to all parties concerned.

Government officials were in a compromised position. Religious and moral interests had one view, while the CSR was not in favour of marriages unless the company consented first, even before application was made to the AGI. As employers of 'single' labourers they were not anxious that marriage should get in the way of work. The Christians on the other hand sought to gain converts through social welfare work but if their own ministers were barred from conducting marriages then the confidence of the Indian community would be lost. Furthermore, too many casualties were arriving at the MMSA orphanage doorstep. Many were children of parents who had been murdered or who had committed suicide over a broken love affair.

With settlement, Indian men were feeling the question of inheritance. They were anxious that there be no possible challenge to the paternity of their children. This could only be achieved through the sanction of marriage. Thus they were keen that both civil and religious marriage ceremonies would be permitted.

Government officials were caught in a further dilemma over the question of customary marriage. How could a civil government, with its

Christian principle of monogamy ever countenance 'heathen' marriage rites which permitted, among other things, polygamy?. They were afraid that having recognised traditional marriage laws in their entirety they would also have to recognise polygamy, and rights to dissolution of marriage on grounds which, to Europeans, seemed inadequate. In the end the problem was avoided by amending aspects of the 1892 legislation without fundamentally questioning the principles upon which it was based.

As time went on the unsolved problems intensified. The 1914 Legislative Council debates over the marriage question revealed the extent of European 'interest in the question of Indian marriages. Lawyer Crompton argued that the Ordinance 'does not provide for marriage of any kind whatever', urging that all marriage regulations for everyone in the colony should be placed in one ordinance. Different ordinances not only confused everyone, but resulted in unnecessary paperwork (Hansard 14 Sept 1914). Wealthy European merchant, Hedstrom, agreed with Crompton, arguing further that the subject was of great importance because 'as we all know, the family is the basis or foundation on which the whole structure of our social life is built and the family is built on the institution of marriage' (ibid). For this reason the 'man performing the ceremony was undertaking a very 'important duty to the nation and to society' and thus had to be trained properly (ibid). The Attorney General admitted that he had been unable to 'find my way' through the 'maze' of Fiji's marriage laws and urged that the governor appoint a committee to look into the problem (ibid).

As time went on and greater numbers of Indian men settled on land or became 'free', further temporary amendments were sought by the Indian community, especially during the committee's hearings. In 1915 Manilal sought changes to the age criterion, arguing that abuses of young girls could be prevented if they could be allowed to go against their parents' wishes to trade them to men (CSO 6878/15). In 1917 the Indian Settler, the first newspaper published for Indians (with Manilal as editor), pointed out that new marriage laws would eradicate much of the immorality of the women in Fiji...

'it is due to the Government to adopt more stringent measures for the protection of the Indian women and their offsprings, and not have them traded off as so much cattle. Once the woman feels her position secure, so soon will she have more respect for the man, but as conditions prevail at present, there is no warranty of safety, either for man, woman or child, and it is a duty that is owing to every child from the State, namely protection' (Indian Settler Feb 1917 p 3).

By 1918 Badri Maharaj had added his objections to the existing Indian Marriage Ordinance. As a member of the Legislative Council he sought to change legislation to permit a girl of 15 and a boy of 18 to be married without parental consent; but that a young woman of less than 17 would have to get written permission from both her father and mother so long as both parents were resident in the Colony. In case of parents being dead or absent the AGI could give his consent.

A new marriage bill was drafted, and was ready for approval by March 1918. All the marriage laws were to be under one ordinance with individual provision for different groups of people in the Colony. All marriages previously performed were registered and made legal, and only suitable ministers holding registration certificates were permitted to solemnize marriages. Under the section 'Of Marriage between Indians' the bill stated that a declaration of marriage between two immigrants travelling from India was to be taken as legal; the marriage age for men was to be 16, and for females 13, and if women were below this age permission had to be sought from the parents; Hindu and Muslim priests were to be allowed to perform marriages provided they were registered; a penalty was introduced for enticing away a wife of an immigrant from her husband except in cases where evidence was produced that she had been deserted by her husband, or the husband compelled her to leave the house or that the cohabitation was with the knowledge and consent of the husband (the parties at fault could only be taken to court at the consent of the husband or 'guardian'); the wife was permitted to leave her husband if he committed 'aggravated assault' on her in which case he would have to pay for her support and the support of her children; legal custody was to be given to the wife in the case of a child less than 10 years old provided that she did not commit adultery without permission from

her husband. Under this bill a deserted wife was permitted to hold property. Men were also able to sue a woman or her parents for unfulfilled promise of marriage, particularly in cases where a payment or betrothal gift had been presented. A husband could also protect his earnings from claims by his wife in the event of her desertion of him and/or cohabitation with another man (CSO MP 2918/18).

The regulations covering Indian marriages were different in significant ways from those applying to Fijians. The age of marriage of Fijians was higher than those of the Indians- eighteen years- and there were no provisions regarding limits on sexuality or polyandry. The regulations regarding marriages of Fijians and also marriages of Europeans and 'half-castes' were not nearly as stringent compared to those applying to Indians. The clauses in the Indian Marriage Ordinance were remarkable for their implied control of women's autonomy and movement.

When the bill was being discussed in the Legislative Council in April, it became evident that there were several aspects of the Indian marriage regulations of Indians that would inevitably raise legislative and political problems. The members of Council who discussed the bill were all European merchants or lawyers, except for Badri Maharaj, the Indian representative. The debates highlighted the different viewpoints of these men which had to be resolved reasonably and put to legislation. At the same time, two outside constraints were imposed upon the Governor as representative of the British Crown: the Secretary of State for the Colonies' opinions had to be listened to, and the Government of India had a voice in any matter affecting Indians in Fiji. Working within the constraints imposed by these four pressure groups was a difficult task for the Governor. He had to ensure that the legislation was acceptable to the Government of India, if further immigrants were to be imported into the Colony. The Secretary of State in turn wished to please the Government of India, whose legislature already contained several ardent nationalists who threatened Britain's profiteering there. The European community in Fiji, who were in sympathy with the CSR's needs for family labour in the absence of indentured servants, were also beginning to feel threatened by Indian men's political and economic aspirations. The

Marriage Ordinance had of necessity to be a piece of legislation that balanced out the frictions among the different pressure groups.

The clauses pertaining to Indian marriages were the most complex. In the case of Fijians and 'half-castes', the Attorney General wished to raise the age of marriage to eighteen but had been persuaded earlier, in committee, that this should remain at fifteen years for both men and women (LegCo Debates on Marriage 1918). Apart from acknowledging that certain marital relations between Fijians, such as the ability to marry one's wife's sister, (sororate) and one's husband's brother (levirate) be permitted in law, nothing further was discussed. The legislation for Fijian marriages took into account their own traditional patriarchal rules which were incorporated into law. Furthermore, since most Fijians had by that time converted to Christianity their marriage laws did not come into conflict with British State law on the subject.

Indian marriages were another matter. Hitherto much irregularity had existed in the law and some form of regulation was necessary to cancel out abuses, but at the same time certain traditional customs had to be allowed for. This was extremely difficult to do. Many of the alleged abuses, that were committed by Indians in Fiji, were not seen as abuses in the customary setting in India. Early marriage and betrothals were perfectly permissible in India, but the trading in women had been masked behind the understanding that the exchange of women was permanent, and that kinship rules would prevent outright abuses from taking place. The same customary marriage ceremonies were taking place in Fiji but the social context was markedly different and could not fail to have a bearing on the question of sex and marriage. The bartering and bargaining over women that took place in the Fijian situation was overt and not camouflaged by 'culture', custom and kinship. In Fiji there were no caste rules, limited cultural contact with India, and few customary rituals. The relation of 'marriage' was then revealed for what it was- a material relation on which basis wealth could be accumulated. Since women were central to this material relation and they were a scarce commodity, the price paid for them was extremely high. Furthermore, as a commodity, they could be used to generate further income and so many parents sold their daughters over

and over again leading to what the officials called 'marriage irregularities'.

This was obvious to many European officials who debated the question. For example, there was little the Governor could do to overrule the instruction of the Secretary of State that men who conducted 'customary' marriages could not be prosecuted, whereas the initial recommendation of the select committee formulating a marriage bill was that since much of the crime and immorality in Fiji were caused by illegal priests, who could earn a lot of money by marrying the same woman many times over on the instructions of her parents, such marriages should be seen as invalid. But the Secretary of State, upon instructions from India saw this move as one designed to negate traditional customs and culture in Fiji in order to keep Indians in a permanently servile position.

A similar problem arose when the age at which men and women could marry was discussed. The committee had already received several submissions from various provincial government officials in India. The marriage age for women there was 12, which they insisted should apply also to Fiji on the grounds of custom. The committee thought that this was too low and raised it to 13. Badri Maharaj attempted to introduce an amendment to raise it further to 15. He was prevented from doing so on the grounds that the Indian government thought it not 'proper' to let young girls remain unmarried until age 15. Yet it was apparent that the lower age of marriage permitted parents to betroth a child at age nine for a sum of money and then marry her at age 12 or 13, i.e. at the onset of puberty. The colonial officials recognised this as an abuse but found themselves powerless to deal with it. But they remained firm when some people in India objected to the specific clause that had been designed to 'protect' the wives of Indians from male abuse. The Attorney General insisted that this should remain (presumably because of the numbers of murders and assaults of women that had occurred) because it was extremely significant for Fiji.

The major problem was the tension between religious authority and State legislation. The discussion of the Indian Marriage Ordinance highlighted the difference between the State and 'god'. Some mechanism

had to be found to reconcile the tension between the two. This was achieved by upholding the principles of patriarchy. Permission was granted to those men who arrived in the Colony with several wives to remain polygamous. Each wife was considered to be a legal wife. But a man could not return to India to obtain additional wives. LegCo members Hedstrom and the Attorney General pointed out.. 'whilst we will recognise the customs of Indians on first arrival in the Colony, after they have become domiciled here we will not recognise polygamy as part of the law of the land....it is not intended to recognise any other form of polygamy' (ibid). That the members were sensitive to this tension was revealed by another member's comment that the idea behind the 1918 Marriage Ordinance was that 'State and not religious marriages' would be recognised. This was agreed to by everyone as the basic principle.

The ammended bill was expected to pass into law. It was passed by the Legislative Council in April 1918 and was due to come into effect in December. However on 10 December, 1918, the Attorney General advised the Governor that the provisions of the new bill were under consideration by the Secretary of State and the Government of India. It should not yet come into force (CSO MP 10037/18). At the end of the month a letter was sent from Downing Street to Governor Rodwell advising that the Government of India wanted the bill to provide for marriage between a Hindu man and his sister's daughter in cases where such marriages were in accordance with caste customs (CSO MP 10455/18). This was allowed for and the ordinance served as the guideline for all marriages being registered and celebrated in the Colony. Some minor adjustments were attempted shortly after the law was Gazetted, e.g. to raise the marriage age to 18 years for boys and 15 years for girls on the grounds that the offspring of people who married young were not strong enough to help build the great 'empire' of Britain, (CSO MP 4571/18); but the Indian government refused to allow it saying it was contrary to Indian custom (CSO MP 5510/19). Finally on January 1 1920, the new Marriage Ordinance of Fiji came into effect. The ordinance had little effect on the majority of Indians. They showed no signs of wanting to register their marriages in greater numbers than before and many of the abuses continued that the ordinance was designed to eradicate continued. This made elite

Indian men anxious, and by 1922 they began to lodge further appeals with regard to the question of marriage.

They agitated for the right of priests who were not registered and who did not have the literacy standards, to be registered as marriage officers (CSO MP 4858/22). By 1925 they were ready to act. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary, the Secretary of the Indian Reform League (a body of educated Indian men anxious to reform laws hindering Indian male advancement), D. Rameshwar stated that it was necessary to take another look at the marriage ordinance on the grounds that there were fewer legal marriages taking place and far too many being solemnized by unregistered priests. As Rameshwar stated, this had the 'effect of perpetuating the irregular unions which have existed in the past amongst Indians. Such unions have caused considerable damage among Indians in Fiji' (CSO MP 2845/25).

The government's response was to form another committee. This time Indian men had a decidedly greater input. The committee members were two Indian men, S.S. Chowla (the same person who had abandoned Manilal in 1920) and S. Buksh. There was also a European member, R.C. Higginson. One Indian member was a Muslim, the choice of whom reflected Indian male politics of separatism after 1920, and the other represented Hindu interests.

The 1926 Committee began their hearings and called for representations from the Indian community. Petitions were received from the Anjuman Hidayatul-Islam, from the local Sikhs and from the Sanatan Hindu Dharma of Nausori (ibid). The Muslims called for the registration of all marriages in Fiji regardless of who performed them so long as they were registered celebrants. They also sought a different set of rules for the age of marriage from that in India ('if this is done then girls under 13 will not be given away'). The Sanatans insisted that the section permitting women to hold property together with men- and thereby having the legal ability to sue for its division- should be repealed. The Sanatan submission is worth quoting in parts:

'According to Hinduism the domestic fire must be maintained as a primary duty and in its maintenance and performance of the household rights the Hindu

wife must take part with her husband. The Mahabharata says "A wife is necessary to the man who would celebrate the family sacrifices eventually". The wife's gotra (sub-caste) becomes that of her husband; her complete initiation is effected by her marriage; she renounces the protection of her paternal manes and passes into the family of her husband. The connexion being this intimate there should be no litigation between the married pair and there can be no division of property between them. Marriage between persons of different caste is generally impossible without a specific allowance by the caste law. In India the Hindu marriages are governed by Hindu law...In Fiji Hindus do not follow customary law and marry between castes but this does not matter as long as they are all Hindus' (ibid).

Having been 'without caste' for such a long time, it became necessary for 'free' Indians to reassert their identity after indenture. There was no better method of achieving this than through the rules of patriarchal religion which defined in no uncertain terms, the 'roles' of men and women. If men were to retain their 'izzat' and their honour then certain rules for women's behaviour and relations with men had to be clearly articulated. Women's opinions in this matter were not sought. There is no evidence to suggest that they had a voice in these discussions. The committee resolved to recommend the ordinance be amended according to the wishes of the Indian men. This was passed by the Legislative Council soon after (CSO MP 2845/26). The Europeans merely legislated the patriarchal requests of Indian men.

The following year, emergent Indian leader Vishnu Deo urged that in the marriage of Indians the views of outsiders such as the Indian government should be disregarded altogether, especially with regard to the marriage age of Indian girls. Deo argued that there were a number of Indians who were still selling their girls and another 'crowd' who were intent on buying them (CSO MP 1374/27). He said that marriage priests were 'useless' because they continued to conduct illegal marriages. According to Deo the section in the 1918 ordinance pertaining to the marriage age was at fault. It resulted in child marriage, immorality and the downfall of the community ('age 13 is a disgraceful age to be a mother'). He argued for the age of 21 for boys and 15 for girls. Only parents, (not the girl herself), should be

allowed to provide the age of their daughter for the purposes of marriage otherwise the girl 'who has been defiled already and is thus willing to be enticed' is taken away with her consent (ibid).

Deo's submission was taken seriously by the Attorney General. He urged that, since 'Indian girls are treated as mere chattels and sold so, although it is not the practice of the colonial or imperial government to interfere unduly with the beliefs and customs of different peoples, we should help Indian womanhood by putting marriage relations on a more modern and more civilised basis' (CSO MP 3167/28). The Colonial Secretary agreed with this saying that consent should always be obtained from both parties, and not only from the parents. The Attorney general also mentioned that the legitimacy of children was affected by the Marriage Ordinance and that Indians should be exempt from the necessity of proceeding under the Legitimation Ordinance (ibid).

Following further representations from Indians over the next two years further sections of the 1918 ordinance were repealed. Most important were the sections that protected a woman from aggravated assault (which had previously been a ground for permitting her to leave her husband) and allowed her to hold property independent of her husband if she left him. The repeal of another section permitted the woman's husband to take responsibility for her debts even after the couple had separated, and betrothal fees could no longer be claimed in the case of an unfulfilled promise of marriage.

While the Hindus appeared to be getting everything they asked for in terms of 'protection' of their women, Muslim men were still not satisfied with the Marriage Ordinance of 1918. Although their frustration was expressed in terms of the Ordinance itself, what they really wanted was a fundamental change in the divorce regulations. In a 1929 letter to the Colonial Secretary, the representative of the Jumma Mosque of Toorak, K.A. Dean, urged that the question of divorce had not been discussed to their satisfaction (CSO MP 267/30). They had made representation a few years before which urged the Colonial Secretary to make provision for Muslim divorce (CSO MP 2845/25). In their 1929 letter, they pointed out that under the present Fiji law

they could not obtain divorce as the law was based on the 'Bible' where the only grounds permitted were fornication, persistent cruelty and lengthy desertion (7 years). 'In Islam marriage is seen as a civil contract between two persons of opposite sex. It is not regarded as a religious sacrament indissoluble in all circumstances. So it is reasonable and proper that it can be put to an end by either party' (ibid). The present law forced the parties seeking dissolution to 'become 'adulterous' or lead miserable lives. They asked that changes be made to allow for mutual consent of the parties seeking divorce; desertion for two years and over; impotency; persistent cruelty and other special grounds which would be assessed by the newly established office of the Secretary for Indian Affairs.

The reply from the Colonial Secretary was not encouraging. Writing in 1930 after seeking permission from London to review the divorce laws of Fiji, he stated that there was little that the government could do in this matter because the Secretary of State for the Colonies 'refuses to change it' (ibid). Nevertheless after further representation another committee was set up, this time comprising mostly Muslims, because it was recognised that this group was most affected.

The question of the divorce laws had not really concerned Indian men in the latter stages of indenture. Much more crucial was the question of marriage for it was believed that the lack of marital restrictions had made the Indian women so uncontrollable. When divorce was discussed at all it was by the members of the MMSA who wrote submissions on behalf of Fijians (see for example MMSA M/31, proposed letter to Hugh Cecil, London, on divorce of Fijians). But for Indians the changing political climate of the 1920s forced Indian men to suggest rules that would monitor and control the movements of women. They would make it more difficult for women to behave as they had done in the past under indenture. As marriage laws became more and more restrictive for women it could not fail to have an impact on men also. It was difficult to confine women to the home without confining men as well. Under such circumstances Muslim men, who had claimed the advantages of polygamy and divorce in the past, felt restricted and stifled by the enforced domesticity of women. Hindu men had never had

this problem because cases of divorce among Hindus were not sanctioned by customary law. It was not surprising therefore that Muslim men would soon begin to ask for legal sanction for some of the patriarchal advantages they had enjoyed before.

Eventually all groups were catered for; the exception of course being women! Nowhere was there an opinion asked of women regarding their ideas of marriage and divorce. It was assumed by groups of European men - the government officials as well as the missionaries- that men should decide the rules for marriage and divorce and impose these upon women. They depended upon Indian men to fine-tune the details of legislated oppression and exploitation of women. Indian men were only too pleased- they were busy reconstructing their identity in Fiji and the domestication of women was a necessary part of the reconstruction ideology.

CSR officials did not offer an opinion. Despite it having been complaints against the CSR for not permitting Indians to marry that had started the whole question, company the officials offered few comments as debates progressed. The CSR farming scheme was dependent on some permanency of personal relationships but the activities of Indian men, government officials and the Christians freed the officials from taking more than a cursory interest in the matter. At the visit of a delegation from India in 1922, comprising two Indians and a European (the report of which was later suppressed because it criticised CSR exploitation in Fiji), Knox was able to say with confidence that very few married women were employed on their estates (ABL 142/3166). In general terms, if CSR could not get the labourers they needed from India, then a substitution had to be accepted and the marriage of Indians suited the small farmer and contractor schemes for cultivation. There was no need for CSR to get involved in political and legislative matters unless such matters directly impinged upon their ability to conduct business.

There is little to suggest in any of the official documents that Indian women had a voice after 1920. The only reference to their activities appears in the Methodist Mission files. After 1920 greater numbers of Methodist Missionaries (mainly women) arrived to do charity

work among the Indian women whom they recognised as the most disadvantaged (apart from children) in the whole Colony. These sisters attempted to attract young female students to their church schools with limited success initially. Later they came in in greater numbers as children of wealthier parents were not needed at home. The education they offered the women concentrated on reading, writing, arithmetic, and domestic science. As one of them pointed out in her diary, 'the majority of girls will become home-makers and as such they will have tremendous influence and power to raise, retard or lower the standard of home life and of the community...a girl who has been educated in such a way that her intellectual powers have had the chance to develop will use them in the service of her home if given the opportunity' (MMSA M/94/(a) Misc Section). This was reflected in the policy of the MMSA when all matters pertaining to 'our Indian work in Fiji' were discussed annually. At an education conference held in 1921 the Synod agreed that the instruction for Indian girls should give 'more prominence to domestic arts and industries, hygiene, subjects of a practical nature, and moral training' (Journal of the 84th Annual District Synod of the Fiji District, Indian Mission Business). This policy remained in force until well after World War II.

The other religious schools were little different. Many Indian religious schools had sprung up in the Colony after 1910 to cater for the educational needs of Indian children hitherto ignored by CSR and government (see Kondappi 1951), but few girls were initially permitted by their parents to attend. If by some chance they were allowed to be educated they could only remain at school until the onset of puberty after which they were withdrawn and married off, or trained for housework at home. It would not be surprising to learn that many girls were not interested in religious instruction which was peddled in the name of 'education', and left school voluntarily.

Despite this handicap, and the disadvantages in the spheres of paid work and politics, some individual women succeeded and became leading educationists and health workers in Fiji. Women such as Bhanmatti Prasad, Lila Ram Samuj and those who were born after 1925 (i.e. of my mother's generation) and came from homes where the initial struggle

for political identity of the father had not been witnessed, became successful as the first students of Dudley House School run by the MMSA. These girls were the first Fiji-born women after indenture had been abolished, and the spirit of reconstruction rather than the memory of 'girit' motivated their activities.

These young women also benefitted from their parents having become town dwellers after the expiry of their indentures. Many bought shops and small businesses and could afford to employ servants. By 1918 there were 1188 retail store owners in the towns (Ali 1980 p 17). There were also 737 hawkers, and even four photographers! (ibid). In 1888 only 53 Indians were 'in business' but by 1918 this was the employment category of 2154 people. Most of the Indians remained cultivators and gradually extended their holdings. In 1888 only three acres in total were held by Indians. By 1917 this had increased to 115,635 acres (ibid p 25). The successful Indians in Fiji were the men. But not all men were successful. The large majority remained poor cultivators, negotiating with the CSR year after year for better cane prices and less stringent methods of control. The wives of these men were doubly disadvantaged. As wives they kept the family in food and clothing and as workers they enabled the company to keep its wages and cane prices lower than the reproductive costs of the farmer and his family.

The rate of Indian women's gainful employment did not improve until 1966, three years after they were first permitted to vote. The literacy rate of Indian women was always far lower than that of Fijian women, and considerably lower than that of Indian men until the 1950s when a slight improvement was recorded. In 1921 38.5 per cent of the Indian males and 2.5 per cent of Indian females were literate, mainly in Hindustani. By 1946, the male literacy rate was 49.5 per cent, and the female literacy rate had increased to 16.7 per cent. In 1946 only 11.7 per cent Indian women could read their mother tongue, whereas the corresponding figure for Fijian women was 77.53 per cent. Writing in 1946, Legislative Council Member Ami Chandra pointed out that 'The Indian females are far behind the Indian males in their ability to read and write, either their mother tongue, or English, or both' (Chandra: 1953 p 564). This state of affairs was indicative of the low

value placed on women's ability to become anything other than an 'honourable' housewife.

Summary

More than anything else, the development of the Marriage Ordinances in Fiji between 1892 and 1930 reveals the changing patriarchal ideologies in Fiji which accompanied the development of productive resources and the exploitation of labour. The first battles between Indian men and officials in Fiji were over the former's inability to manage their own permanent relationships with women. Under indenture these Indian men had limited power to challenge CSR's insistence that single and youthful labourers should always be available. But even within the context of plantation life Indian men attempted to exercise their rights over women through marriage. Men wrote letters to the governor and to India complaining that they were not permitted to stay with the women they had married. They were joined in this battle by the Methodist missionaries who were motivated by two aims; in the first place they were critical of what they considered to be rampant immorality of women in the absence of marriage, and in the second place they wished to make a success of converting Indians to Christianity. One of the biggest obstacles for the missionaries was their inability legally to conduct Christian marriages among the Indians.

As Indians gained their freedom and access to land, several important considerations emerged. The CSR sugar company would not give land to those who did not have a family; without women the farm could not be worked cheaply; without permanent relationships children could not inherit; and without the patriarchal family the political aspirations of men could not be met. All these were significant points and were reinforced by the visits of Gandhians from India and other colonies.

These sentiments were also reinforced by the arrival after 1910 of 'free' men (with their families) and religious leaders brought in by those who could afford it. Many of these leaders were false priests and probably ended up in Fiji from other colonies or were evading the law in India itself. These men made a reasonable living as marriage celebrants, especially as many parents married their female children

many times over. As they settled in Fiji their positions became sanctified so that eventually no one really questioned whether the sadhu was really a Brahmin. Eventually they were consulted as 'experts' in the discussions on marriage and their opinion taken into serious consideration in the formulation of marriage law.

But not all were deceivers. Many genuinely religious and holy men came to Fiji. These were well-respected religious leaders who attempted to improve the circumstances of the Indians. Sadhu Basist Muni was one who understood the labour struggles of the men on strike and also was rumoured to have attempted collaboration between the unions of Australia, New Zealand and Fiji.

Despite their sincerity, they taught the superiority of the male Indian over the female. Their teachings relied upon the ancient Sanskrit scriptures which had a defined place for women. They also followed Gandhi's teachings of peaceful resistance and civil disobedience, calling upon the same spiritual and emotional sustenance which was often alienating for women. The Indian nationalist struggle, incorporating religious teachings, myths and western liberal reformism, was a male dominated movement. The rules were made by men, the movement itself was male-inspired and run. There was little room for women except as appendages of men, echoing their cries for freedom from foreign rule and playing the independent but dutiful wife. There was little room here for the working women of India and Fiji.

As Indian men became financially secure, the marriage ordinances were ammended. Between 1918 and 1930 there were as many as seven ammendments to the 1918 Marriage Ordinance. All of these imply further controls over women, especially those that attempted to define the suitable age for the marriage of girls. Most of the submissions to the Governor and Colonial Secretary after 1918 were from Indian men. The MMSA left the question of marriage alone after 1918, apparently confident that Indian men themselves were able to take care of matters.

For Indian men the period after 1920 was most important for political and economic reconstruction. Many had become wealthy and some had

acquired a reputation for appropriate leadership of the Indian communities. Anti-capitalist agitators such as Manilal and others had long since gone, and the type of Indian male cultivated by the government officials was different. They were much more likely to be anti-labour and pro-government and, sometimes even in favour of the CSR. Many of these men were vehemently against strike action and always called for negotiation rather than confrontation. They were also not to be trusted to fully represent farmers' interests in parliament. After 1930 the Fiji Indian canefarmers continued to be represented inadequately by various political leaders many of whom (such as A.D. Patel, the famous Indian lawyer and parliamentarian who helped carve out the independence document of 1970) were themselves rich landlords. Under such circumstances even impoverished Indians' interests were not represented adequately in the political arena. It is quite possible to see why women would have been ignored.

The low payments and consequent impoverishment forced Indians to surround themselves with kin so that the labour output would be spread over all the members of the productive unit. With expanding kinship, rules and regulations had to be set up for the monitoring of family relations. Guidelines for appropriate behaviour were constructed, and since women were most affected, these guidelines controlled and monitored their ability to associate freely with men. The pooling of resources through the construction of kinship relations enabled Indian men gradually to acquire more resources in the form of land or stock. Since this wealth had to be protected, rules of kinship had to be followed, again imposing particular and unique restrictions on women rather than men. Thus women's lives increasingly revolved around home and hearth as they were restricted from the public life of education, franchise and paid work.

CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION

In this thesis I aimed to demonstrate the connection between the fact of 'femininity' of Indian women and the accumulation of wealth in Fiji, between the years 1879-1930. The fact of 'femininity' was understood and treated in terms of the labour processes that women were involved in, encompassing their work in the (re)production of labour and wealth. It was argued that Indian women who went to Fiji as indentured workers, and who were later relegated to the domestic sphere, were involved in a three-fold labour process- social reproduction, daily reproduction of the labour force and generational (biological) reproduction. The tension arising from women's simultaneous involvement in these production processes served as a barrier to women's advancement and autonomy. As indentured servants women were contracted to work, but their femininity was used to remove them from paid employment. Women's accessibility to gainful employment served to undermine the patriarchal basis of the industrial plantation. The emergent contradictions had the effect of confining women to home and hearth, limiting their ability to seek a public life.

The literature on Fiji offers us two views of the labour processes at the time of colonial and capitalist penetration. In one view, it is assumed that Fiji was a pluralist social formation in which different groups had different interests that were maintained and upheld through negotiation and consensus. There is little in this literature to show the massive contradictions that pervaded Fiji at the time of Cession and during capitalist investment in the sugar industry. These contradictions were class contradictions and have only recently been the focus of political economy studies. This has been referred to in Chapters 2 and 3. However the political economists failed adequately to theorise another major contradiction. By ignoring the gendered division of labour, the political economists have presented only a half-completed picture of early Fiji.

This thesis has attempted to complete the picture. The thesis argues that unless gender (incorporating the acknowledgement of sexual

difference, sexual division of labour, and sexuality) is made central to the analyses, an adequate understanding of the problems that beset the Fijian people and thereby providing an opportunity to pose some meaningful solutions, can never be achieved. This study articulates these major contradictions for a certain period of history, namely 1879-1930 only.

In the first four chapters which set the scene for the case study, I argued that the precise evaluation of women's labour in the process of wealth accumulation can be understood with reference to the unfree/free and waged/unwaged labour processes. I argued that in pre-capitalist social formations women were already producing a surplus under unfree relations of production. This surplus was accumulated by men and by the ruling classes (both men and women) through complex mechanisms of obligation and force which defined women as property. With reference to both Indian and Fijian social formations, prior to capitalist infiltration and colonial development, I argued that the exploitation of women's labours was accompanied by ideological and physical means of repression. The ideology of marriage, which encompassed a contractual obligation monitored by the construction of kinship, served to confine women to the domestic sphere where they produced a surplus under varying degrees of compulsion. It was held that marriage, and the emotional attachment to children served to mask the exploitation of women's labour and the exchange of women as producers of wealth in terms of children and products for export. This exploitation took place despite women's own understanding of the processes by which they were oppressed and exploited. In many cases, due to the interconnectedness of class and sex, women collaborated in the exploitation of other women. This was illustrated with reference to the number of cases where mothers collaborated with men in the bartering of their female children.

Furthermore, at the time of early capitalist penetration, the divisions between women were fostered through the ideology of racism, which, under specific colonial settings could also be seen as a 'relation' of production. But even when 'racism' was not a relation of production, the attribute of colour served to structure people in various productive spheres, and was also used to prevent Indians from

exercising their political rights. Thus in both Indian and Fijian social formations, social relations were based on class and gendered divisions of labour, imposed upon which was the ideology of racism, which had its own material conditions of existence during the period of transition between a pre-capitalist and a capitalist mode of production.

With the advent of colonialism, the pre-capitalist social relations of production became enmeshed with capitalist relations, although these could not become dominant until all unfree and bonded labour processes were eliminated and labour power commodified. Although labour power was commodified in some aspects of public production, it remained privatised and bonded in the domestic sphere within which labour or labour power was itself produced by women.

However, capitalist penetration of the colonies did not imply that labour power would immediately be commodified. Due to the tenacity of pre-capitalist social relations, which were defined by the easy access of the producers to their means of production, it was difficult for the producers to be divorced from their means of production even though attempts were made to take land away by various means such as enclosures and land theft in both India and Fiji. Furthermore, the traditional class and caste-based relations of production through which hereditary chiefs or lords claimed tribute (surplus) could not be threatened by mere capitalist investment. Capitalists were not concerned about the ways in which the surplus was accumulated as long as products were available for the capitalist markets. For a lengthy period after colonial and capitalist penetration therefore, products were grown or manufactured under pre-capitalist relations of production. For this reason traditional landlords or chiefs were able to retain their power and privileges. The pre-capitalist relations of production encompassed the production of goods and services by women in the home which made it possible for men to be productive in the public arena. At the same time however, women were limited in their ability to be 'productive' outside the domestic sphere. The public sphere was more likely to bring real rewards such as money or goods.

The Fijian social context at the advent of colonialism and capital

investment clearly illustrates the tensions between the different labour processes. The early administrators of Fiji actively sought foreign investment and made the conditions for investment attractive by importing a large surplus labour force from India. This labour force was attractive for investors because the labourers had been removed from their means of production, and thus had no other means of earning their living other than through plantation production. Meanwhile the native Fijians, who retained their means of production, were set to work on tax farms from which the colonial government derived its revenue. Both sets of workers- the native Fijians and the Indians- were unfree producers. The Fijians were compelled to labour for the chiefs under traditional obligation, and the Indians were restricted by contractual obligation from offering their labour power for sale on the open market. Imposed upon this was the unfree and unwaged labour of women. Women produced children, as well as subsistence and surplus goods and services. The products of their labour were appropriated by those in authority under traditional and capitalist obligatory practices. Furthermore, women provided stability through organising 'family' life. The emotional, sexual and domestic sustenance that they provided ensured that men would continue to offer their labour for the purposes of wealth accumulation.

Indentured Indian women were uniquely caught between the different labour processes on colonial plantations. Although indentured servitude was designed specifically for young, single, male emigrants, Indian women were necessary to provide this labour force with stability and nurturance. The recruitment of women and the conditions under which they were to be worked came to be a major feature of discussions about the success or failure of the industrial plantation. The planters' views about the utility of plantation women were formed in terms of the women's ability to (re)produce within the plantation context. It was recognised that women were not as efficient as men in the production and manufacture of sugar, and that women's roles had to encompass more than their ability to labour as paid workers. Women acted as a 'reserve army of labour' on plantations and were only provided with work when the need arose for extra workers. Thus women were deliberately nudged into domestication even within a context which discouraged the formation of families and the ideology of

marriage. This was a contradiction that was to intensify as the need for larger numbers of labourers to cope with increasing CSR investment arose prior to World War I. This contradiction affected the ability of women to appear for paid work, which further decreased their earning capacity, forcing them to become dependent on Indian men for survival. As such women learnt to use their sexuality to advantage, especially as they were few in number and in great demand.

The deliberate plan for the low proportion of women in the indentured labour force in Fiji, meant that women would be subject to much male attention which interfered with their ability to earn a living through sugar production alone. But significantly, women's pay was three pence lower per task than that given to men. Furthermore the overtasking that was a feature of all plantation production affected women because their working day was always extended. After their fieldwork was over women were expected to provide services for men. Many women dealt with this tension by neglecting their paid work altogether. Sometimes this resulted in actual violence on the part of the overseer or sirdar, and at other times women were sent to gaol for failure to complete tasks or through absence from work. The Colonial Sugar Refining Co of Australia, which had become the major employer of Indian labour, often turned a blind eye to acts of violence on the part of plantation personnel. It was only when extreme cases of violent assault came to the attention of government inspectors that any action against employers was taken. However, it was much more likely that labourers, rather than employers, would be prosecuted under the labour laws.

The usefulness of women to the CSR Co lay more in their ability to provide domestic services than in their ability to produce cane. Women were compelled by force and obligation to maintain the labour force daily and generationally. Although the birth rate on plantations was low during most of indenture, it was understood that when indenture ended, women would be the source of the future labour force. When it was obvious that the days of indenture were limited, health care of women and children was stepped up by both company and government officials. The ideology of 'motherhood' was reconstructed by the company, forcing women to stay out of paid work in order to look after their families.

While Indian women on Fiji's plantations were grossly exploited and oppressed, it cannot be said that they accepted this condition without protest. Women's resistance on plantations took many forms and reflected the multiplicity of their exploitation. As waged workers women went on strike, broke their tools and feigned illness and pregnancy. As domestic workers women refused to stay with one man, playing off one male against another or several others. As women they controlled their fertility, even to the extent of sometimes killing their children or procuring abortions. They also controlled their sexuality by selling their bodies for money when they chose. All these acts of resistance were conducted by them not only as workers but as women. Thus Indian women's view of themselves as workers encompassed their self-identification as women also. Their protests were directed against male dominance as much as they were aimed at their employers.

It was this resistance that came to the attention of Indian nationalists who used the exploitation and oppression of Indian women in Fiji as a major strategy in their battle against the British in India. But the Indian nationalist movement was a movement for reform, not revolution, and thus the protests that were articulated against indenture were framed in moralistic terms. It was pointed out that indenture was an evil practice because it prevented Indian women from exercising their 'privilege' as wives and mothers. This platform defined paid work for women as morally objectionable, and fostered the idea that women's true vocation was marriage and the family. Thus the nationalists themselves encouraged women's domestication by setting down rules for appropriate female occupation and behaviour. As a consequence laws were passed preventing women from engaging in paid work, and policies were formulated which prohibited women from seeking employment outside the home. The Marriage Ordinances that were formulated further set down rules for appropriate male/female relations within which the male was deemed superior in status and privilege.

Despite the overwhelming pressure to conform to the notions of 'wifhood' and 'motherhood', Indian women resisted their exploitation overtly. In the 1920 workers strike, the movement for wage increases

and a cost of living assessment was instigated and led by women. Under the expert leadership of Jaikumari Devi, women challenged both male dominance and capitalist/colonial hegemony. They managed to put together a concerted strike action against the rulers by bringing together Indians of three different classes- the middle class, the urban proletariat, and the semi-proletarians of the cane areas. All three groups had different agendas but their collaboration was achieved on the basis of 'race' politics. The Indians confronted the Europeans from a political platform that represented the interests of all classes of Indians in Fiji. This strike was undermined by the military intervention of Australians and New Zealanders and by the underhand tactics of individual Indians who wished to become upwardly mobile by collaborating with the white rulers. As a consequence, the leaders were deported and the Indians lost the impetus to sustain their demands in a situation where the employers could 'starve out' the workers.

After 1920, Indian women disappeared from the public arena. Most were denied paid work after indenture was over, and others were absorbed into farms and settlements that were deliberately set up by CSR to encourage 'family' production. The development of the Marriage Ordinances after 1920 exacerbated the domestication of women on farms, and as 'housewives' women were removed from the official figures on 'productive' workers. Thus their work, which was already unpaid, also became invisible, and their protests silenced. Despite the failure of the official statistics to discount women's work as 'productive' activity, it is obvious that what women did on farms and in the home was 'work'. Without their labour in the gardens and homes men would have found it impossible to run the farms, the individual size of which was calculated on the basis of 'family' labouring capacities.

The failure of women to offer their labour power for sale under the new production conditions was reflected in their inability to conduct public strikes or battles against exploitation. Significantly, the 'first wave' of the women's movement, after its initial preoccupation with wages and cost of living, became confined to middle class concerns. Wealthy and middle class women of the towns formed women's clubs and associations that concentrated on charity work, whereas the

rich farmers' wives formed sewing guilds and cooking clubs in the country. Neither of these organisations ever confronted the situation of women who were faced with enforced domestication and lack of opportunity in paid work, education and franchise. Indian men became eligible to vote at the end of the 1920s but women did not receive this privilege until the 1960s. Between 1920 and 1966 the major occupation of working women was 'domestic duties' or teaching and nursing. Although these occupations involved the production of a 'surplus', this was never acknowledged by Indian or European men. The native Fijian women were in a similar position, although they had more opportunity for paid work in the burgeoning tourist industry after 1950.

The Fijian case study that constitutes the substance of this thesis may be given a wider use. This study investigated Engels' proposition that women become free upon entering public production. It was argued that public production (paid work) was only partly necessary for the emancipation of women. Male dominance and brutality, which are premised upon the exploitation of women's labour power in the home, are significant barriers to the liberation and autonomy of women. Women are central to (re)production, and control over the products of their labour are maintained through economic means and through violence.

This study also extends the debates on domestic labour and modes of production articulated by marxist and feminist scholars. It was argued that domestic labour cannot be seen as being irrelevant to capitalist circulation (or production) because its production by women ensures that goods are produced under certain conditions for sale in the market. Furthermore, women produce a surplus under unfree relations of production which in some contexts is also unpaid. This position is held in support of the protagonists in the domestic labour debate who recognised that women's labour had some 'meaning' for the accumulation of wealth. I have also argued however that domestic labour produces value and cannot be seen as being marginal to the creation and reproduction of wealth. Further, the notion of unfree relations of production, which is commonly associated with bonded labour such as slavery, indenture and contract, must be extended to include the

situation of women in the family. Women produce goods and services for appropriation by the non-producers under varying degrees of compulsion and traditional obligation which include 'marriage' and kinship rules. When different economic circumstances impinge upon each other, say during colonialism, the bases of women's exploitation and oppression remain intact, enabling goods and services to be produced by them under increasingly complex sets of compulsions. That women find it difficult to remove themselves from such different forms of exploitation has to do with their inability to earn a living within contexts where they have no control over their means of production, and also with their inability to withstand male violence. Women's emotional attachment to their children and their partners also prevents them from exercising autonomy over their own bodies and labour processes. The super-exploitation of women is exacerbated and tolerated because of their centrality in wealth accumulation in all economic systems. I have extended the notion of 'exploitation' to mean appropriation of the labour of the producers by the non-producers in modes other than just the capitalist mode of production. This is clearly indicated with reference to Fiji in this thesis.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 2

- (1) Caste has been variously defined. Broadly, it refers to a hierarchy of groups within a social formation, with group membership determined by birth. Even simply defined, caste contrasts with other social categories such as class, kinship and territorial community in the mode of recruitment of members (i.e. by birth) and its hierarchical aspects (Leonard 1976)
- (2) The burning of Roop Kanwar in 1987 was a public spectacle conducted with the approval of the local community (see Kishwar and Vanita 1988)

CHAPTER 3

- (1) In this chapter I am discussing the features of the type of indentured labour which ran concurrently with slave labour, and in some cases may even have preceeded it in the Carribean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There are two significant differences between the two types of indenture: one concerns the formal appearance of a 'wage', and the second concerns the degree of state support in the functioning of indentured relations of production. In the case of the nineteenth century indenture there was a cash wage which was used to meet 'financial commitments in, or to purchase commodities which could enter the process of 'gift exchange' in the social formation of origin (Miles 1987 p 175), but in early indenture there was no evidence of a 'wage', just of land and a quantity of sugar (or other produce) at the end of the contract. In the nineteenth century form of indenture also, state mechanisms were used to initiate, regulate and enforce contracts between producers and non-producers. The state acted more as a 'relation of production' (Miles *ibid* p 182). The nineteenth century form of indenture also ressembles the

contemporary form of 'contract' labour whereby workers are taken from one spatial location to another. Thus they have no traditional claims to the means of production. Whatever the form of indenture however, the individual was not free for the duration of the contract which took into account his or her after hours activities as well, unlike 'free' wage labour.

- (2) The term (re)production is used here to denote the three-fold process of reproduction: social reproduction, reproduction of the labour force daily, and generational reproduction. These are all processes that women are involved in under varying degrees of freedom, unfreedom and payment.
- (3) This idea was fostered by the 1625 doctrine of Samuel Purchase that all Negroes bore the curse of Ham, recorded in the Old Testament, and that they were destined to bondage and servitude by 'divine decree' (Marsh 1974 p 111)

CHAPTER 4

- (1) I am referring only to unfree wage labour, and not the earlier pre slavery form of indenture in this chapter
- (2) The term 'coolie' is possibly derived from either the Chinese k'u (bitter) and li (strength), or from the Indian Koli which refers to an ethnic group or caste in India who are a hill tribe or aboriginals surviving from pre-Aryan times, or from Culi who are load bearers and dockers. Whatever the social and linguistic origin of the term, the concept refers to a condition of servility, referring to workers who commanded payment for work done (Tinker 1974 pp 41-43).

- (3). In the rigid Indian caste system these people were considered to be almost sub-human. Thus negative Indian opinion within India regarding emigration may not have been expressed on behalf of the hill tribes. In addition, the darker skin colour of these people would have relegated them to a further debased status within the overall colour/caste orientated social situation of India.
- (4). Sirdar (or sardar) can be a contractor or middleman, but on plantations he was the man in charge of a 'gang' of coolies. A sardar's wage was more than that given to ordinary labourers.

CHAPTER 5

- (1). The administering of opium was a well-known method of keeping children quiet during the day when mothers went out to work. For examples from Europe see Rose (1986).

CHAPTER 6

- (1). This situation was shared by the black slave women in America and the West Indies, see for example Davis (1981) and Hooks (1981)
- (2). In all the years of indenture women were unable to care for their children only when they did not have enough money, or when they could not get work. Sometimes children were taken away from their mothers because the authorities decided some women were not suitable mothers (see for example Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia M/33 papers, and CSO MP 5970 Fiji National Archives, Suva)

- (3) This distinction between 'good' and 'bad' women has also been made by Anne Summers in her book Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia, Penguin, Melbourne 1975.
- (4) The bartering of female children was ignored by colonial officials and in 1914 when the Secretary of an International Convention on White Slave Traffic wrote to the governor asking to be furnished with evidence of slavery in women from the Colony, the colonial officials denied that such a traffic was occurring in Fiji. But in 1926, the bartering of Indian women could no longer be ignored, and the colonial officials admitted reluctantly that some form of trading was going on. However, the officials dismissed this as of no importance because 'it was merely a form of marriage betrothal'. For details of this correspondence see CSO Holdover MPs 9805/15, 5061/21, 5379/22, 3721/22, 2797/24, 2178/26, and 3312/23.
- (5) As far as the 'woman' question was concerned, the colonial government echoed the CSR officials practically word for word in its reports for the governments of India and Britain- see for example ABL 142/2190 and 2192. It even permitted the CSR to be represented in the Legislative Council. Only men of means and power got the vote and CSR officials represented both.

CHAPTER 7

- (1) Compare this with the dilemma the Fiji colonial officials were in when a young girl who had been betrothed to a man through custom was later abducted by him. The man was perceived as having legal rights over this woman and therefore could not be prosecuted as a kidnapper. This position was however uncomfortable for the colonial officials who wished to see 'justice' done and who also recognised the father's rights over the woman as fundamental.

CHAPTER 8

- (1). The information on the 1920 strike can be obtained from Council Paper No 67 1920 and numerous accounts in the Confidential C Series CSO Files held at the Fiji National Archives.

CHAPTER 9

- (1). Compare this with Mao's notion of semi-proletarian as one who produces both labour power and value for capital, in Mao Tse-Tung, Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society, in Mao Tse-Tung, Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung Volume 1, Foreign Languages Press, 1975 pp 13-21

GLOSSARY

arkatia	unlicenced recruiter of indentured Indians.
bete	Fijian priestly class.
Buli	the administrative head of a district (tikina) in the Fijian administration.
i-tokatoka	family group, subdivision of a mataqali.
kerekere	to request or to borrow (reciprocal).
koro	village.
lala	the chief's power to call upon his people's labour (tribute).
mana	spiritual authority.
masi	bark cloth made from mulberry plants.
matanitu	the largest political unit in pre-Cession Fiji- the State.
mataqali	an agnatically related social unit-usually a lineage of the larger clan.
Roko Tui	head of a province (post Cession).
sirdar (or sardar)	Indian headman in charge of plantation work gangs.
solevu	public ceremonial exchange of wealth between two Fijian collectivities.
suttee (or sati)	widow burning.

turaga-ni-koro	elected or appointed administrative head of a village.
vanua	land, an association or confederation of <u>yavusa</u> under a chief or <u>tui</u> - king.
vasu	the relationship between a person and his mother's clan.
yaqona	a plant the roots of which are prepared and used by Fijians as a social and ceremonial drink.
yavu	house platform or foundation.
yavusa	a social unit of agnatically related members larger than the <u>matagali</u> and the members of which claim descendents from a common founding male ancestor.

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PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Former indentured labourers - Bodh Ram, Sukhdeo, Sincharan, Sakina
and Meera, Wainibokasi, Fiji.

Barodi Buksh,	Nausori
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Mrs Bhanmatti Prasad	Suva
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Mrs A. Shameem	Suva
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Mrs Isabelle Madhaven	Suva
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Mrs Zinnat Dean	Suva
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RECRUITMENT CHART FOR FIJI



